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CHAPTER 18A

CHRISTIANITY, A.D. 70–192

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It would be difficult, and almost disingenuous, to undertake a history of 'the church' within this period as though it were one developing entity. It is generally admitted that the structure of the churches differed widely from place to place, and that what was plausible speculation in one city might be heresy in another. Yet this is equally true of other topics which are frequently approached with a presumption of uniformity: we cannot infer, because we have a series of rescripts from emperors, that each would have been familiar with, or obedient to, the policy of the last;[1] nor when so much argument persists as to the 'causes of persecution', can we assume that this phenomenon or its causes were the same in every city. This chapter will attempt to give due weight to the diversity of regions, and will not aspire to a universal narrative. If, as is so often the case in the study of antiquity, we do not know how to characterize those 'happenings' of which we have some evidence, we can hardly expect to ascertain 'why' they happened, and perhaps not even 'when'.

1. Syrian region (outside Antioch)

The book of Revelation and the three synoptic gospels all allude to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, which, involving as it did the dissolution of the temple, could be seen as a divine anathema against Judaism. The Christians of the city fled to Pella (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* III.5.2), and from this point history can say little of them. Eusebius gives a continuous list of bishops after James (*Hist. Eccl.* III.11 etc.), but since the latter was not in fact a bishop, but the chairman of the presbyters, this information carries little weight.[2] Claims are often made for the perseverance of a 'Jewish Christianity' in this area, and the Ebionites,[3] who are said to have practised poverty

[1] Rives (1995) 255 notes that Ulpian made the first collection; but cf. n. 23 below.

[2] *Acts* 15:23 and 21:18 etc.; Campbell (1993).

[3] Epiphanius, *Panarion* XXX etc. For materials on 'Jewish Christianity' see Klijn and Reinink (1977), and for recent scepticism Taylor (1990).

in imitation of Christ without accepting his divinity, are sometimes represented as custodians of the most primitive Christian teaching. Yet even the earliest writings of the New Testament presuppose the adoration of Christ as Lord, if not as God, and if this cult was not spontaneous, no analogies from the ancient world can explain how it arose. Much that we are told about the Ebionites is certainly fictitious – the name of their founder Ebion, for example, which is nothing but the Hebrew term for a pauper – and unless that were a community of Euhemerists, we must suppose that they worshipped Christ along with the rest of the primitive church.

It may have been in Syria that Lucian first encountered Christianity; for not only was he a native of that province, but he says that it was in Syria that the Cynic Peregrinus formed a temporary alliance with the church. Peregrinus was to die upon a pyre of his own construction at Olympia; this was not the act of a philosopher, Lucian tells us, but of a lunatic and a criminal, for whom the worshippers of a 'crucified sophist' were the fittest company (*Peregrinus* 13). In fact he had been imprisoned as a Christian by the governor of Syria, but released with 'the usual penalties' (*ibid.* 14), which presumably means a flogging. Even the church was later to expel him for the eating of 'forbidden foods' (*ibid.* 15): this passage implies that Lucian was familiar with some ceremony of excommunication, and also with the prohibition of things sacrificed to idols (*eidolothuta*) which appears to have been ubiquitous in the second-century church.[4]

In the great intellectual centre of Apamea, the philosopher Numenius is said to have shown some knowledge of the gospels (Origen, *c. Cels.* IV.51). It was also from Apamea that the teachings of the Elchasaites were dispersed to other provinces (Hippolytus, *Ref.* IX.13–16). This sect, which dated its origins to a vision received in A.D. 100 from Christ and the Holy Spirit, abjured both sexual intercourse and the use of meat in order to emancipate the soul from the fatal bondage which the stars were thought to impose upon the flesh. An excessive pursuit of continence was also ascribed to Tatian, a pupil of the orthodox martyr Justin, who in later life is said to have founded the encratitic movement in his homeland (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I.28.1). Renouncing meat and marriage, he averred that the material creation was the work of a lesser God (Origen, *De Oratione* 28.5). He did not, however, quarrel with the basis of orthodoxy, for he compiled a *Diatessaron* or *Harmony of the Four Gospels*. The title suggests that, like his other works, it was composed in Greek, although it was in Syriac-speaking areas that it became a standard text.[5]

[4] See Edwards (1989b) on Lucian's plausibility; Downing (1993) on Christians and Cynics.
[5] Moliton (1969).

An encratitic tendency, and therefore a Syrian provenance, have been claimed for the gospel of Thomas, now extant as a Coptic text from Nag Hammadi in Egypt.[6] The document from this site which would appear to have been most popular in antiquity, the *Apocryphon of John*, is also thought to have originated in the eastern provinces. It is perhaps the first epitome of a developed Gnostic system, and asserts that the divine reflection, falling into matter, produced the physical universe as a lurid imitation of the spiritual realm. This and related texts describe the soul's ascent through ceremonies and visions to the realm of perfect freedom; by contrast the necessity of ecclesiastical discipline is the keynote of the *Didache*, or 'Teaching of the Two Ways'.[7] It lays down tests for distinguishing true prophets from the impostors, who roam from church to church in quest of food, accommodation or pecuniary gain (13). Other hypocrites are alleged to keep the Jewish fasts (8), perhaps in order to conceal their Christianity. The work is early, as bishops are not yet distinct from presbyters (15): it prescribes for confession, baptism and the eucharist, and gives the Lord's Prayer in its longest form (6–9).

The church of Edessa flattered itself with legends of an ancient and extraordinary foundation. The correspondence of Abgar V and Jesus is recorded by Eusebius, who adds that Thomas was sent to cure the king of his disease (*Hist. Eccl.* I.13). The figure of greatest note within this period is Bardaisan, who in his Greek form Bardesanes is mentioned by Eusebius as the author of a syncretistic heresy (*Hist. Eccl.* IV.30.1). He was admired, however, for his polemic against astrology, much of which survives in Greek and Syriac: his argument, familiar from Carneades, was that if different zones are governed by the stars, we should expect to find the same destiny befalling all men of a single race.[8]

2. Antioch

But in Syria, the metropolis was, as everywhere, the chief centre of Christianity: indeed, it was at Antioch that the sect received its name (Acts 11:26). We possess a list of bishops, but most of the names are ciphers after Peter and Ignatius. Peter's tenure may be legendary, though the apocryphal works ascribed to him, the *Preaching* and the *Gospel*, had more currency here than in any other region.[9] Ignatius has bequeathed a vivid portrait of

[6] Quispel (1981); text in Robinson (1990) 124–38. On the *Apocryphon of John*, see Quispel (1979) and Robinson (1990) 104–23.

[7] Provenance and date are discussed in Audet (1958).

[8] See Drijvers (1966), and *FGrH* IIIc. 648–56.

[9] Dobschutz (1893); Hennecke and Schneemelcher (1992) 36–40. The *Preaching* is partly incorporated in the Clementine novels, centred on Caesarea. Cf. n. 11 below.

himself in the seven letters which are generally agreed to be authentic.[10] Five of these were written to Asian churches, one to Polycarp and one to Rome; thus they tell us little of his own province, except that there must have been some form of official persecution there in the early second century. Proud as he was to be following Paul to Rome, Ignatius must have been a citizen; his only designation for himself is bishop of Syria (*Rom.* 2.2), which must mean, not that Syria was a single church, but rather that the Antiochene incumbent had already acquired a metropolitan status. Ignatius was aware that his passion for martyrdom was eccentric, and he may not have been expressing common sentiments when he calls himself a ransom for the community (*Eph.* 21.1 etc.) and predicts that death will bring him straight to Christ (*Rom.* 5.3 etc.).

Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, composed the longest apology from this period. Appealing to Greek philosophy in support of Christian teachings, he also produced a learned demonstration that the Pentateuch is superior in antiquity (and thus, of course in value) to the literature of Greece. He is the earliest writer to speak of the Godhead as a Trinity, a *trias* (*Ad Autolycum* II.15 etc.), and says more than most contemporary apologists of esoteric topics such as resurrection, judgement and the Fall. Sarapion (appointed *c.* 190) is the latest Bishop of Antioch from our period (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.12). His action in first allowing, then proscribing the circulation of the so-called *Gospel of Peter* need not indicate that Antioch had no canon; on the contrary, it was only by appeal to works admitted to be canonical that he was able to pronounce its doctrine spurious.[11] If use had implied canonicity, the work would have been scrutinized more closely at the outset, and could not have been so easily suppressed.

3. Proconsular Asia

Among the numerous apostolic churches of the Troad Ephesus had the strongest claim on Paul and also purported to house the tombs of John the Apostle and the Virgin Mary. Moreover it was said to have been the home of John the Elder, to whom some ascribed the Book of Revelation (Eus. *HE* III.39.4ff.). Ephesus is one of the seven churches denounced in this book for their laxity in a time of (unidentified) persecution: the others are Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyateira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.[12] The consumption of pagan offerings is now treated as a heresy, since the idols had been fed with the blood of Christians (2.14 etc.); an allusion to a 'synagogue of Satan' in Philadelphia and Smyrna (2.9, 3.9) may imply that some were

[10] On the milieu of Ignatius, see Bammel (1982); on his metropolitan status, von Harnack (1908) 463; and for the following speculations, Edwards (1995).

[11] See n. 40 below. Cf. Origen, *De Principiis* I, *pr.* 8.

[12] Sweet (1979) 21–9 dates it to the reign of Domitian; cf. n. 39 below.

hiding Christianity under the forms of Judaism. The same two churches are censured by Ignatius for observing sabbaths without the circumcision (*Phil.* 6.9; *Smyrn.* 5.1; cf. *Magn.* 8–9). Here, as in Tralles, Ephesus and Magnesia, the apostates were urging the 'docetic' claim that the sufferings of Christ had been illusory – a position rebutted also in the First Epistle of John (1.1ff.). For Ignatius his own approaching martyrdom is a witness to the Passion (*Trall.* 10 etc.), and Christ himself is the 'archive' which contains all truths required for our salvation (*Phil.* 8.2). He is present in the eucharist, at which the whole church is gathered as a sacrificial body around its bishop (*Eph.* 5 etc.). The bishop is sovereign even in his silence (*Eph.* 6.1), and the presbyters and deacons must be treated with the reverence due to God and his apostles (*Trall.* 3.1 etc.); any other gathering is a 'pharmacy of death' (*Trall.* 6.1). We cannot therefore doubt that the threefold order was established in the towns of western Asia; but, as Bauer observes,[13] the tone in which the autocratic theories of this bishop are propounded make it clear that they were not yet commonplaces, even there.

By common consent of scholars, it is Christians who are denounced for their lack of culture in the forty-sixth oration of the pagan sophist Aelius Aristides. His invectives may have been sharpened by his devotion to Asclepius,[14] but may also reflect the popular antipathy to Christians in his native town of Smyrna, which led between 146 and 167 to the burning of the aged bishop Polycarp on a charge of atheism.[15] Philippus the Asiarch was the servant of the mob (*Martyrium Polycarpi* 12.2), and we do not hear that the other Christians put themselves in danger when they asked for Polycarp's body, though (as in all martyrologies) the petition was refused (*Mart.* 17). The day of Polycarp's death is called a 'great sabbath' in our narrative (*Mart.* 21), which may mean that his death was metaphorically perceived as an Easter sacrifice. Good Friday in the Asiatic calendar coincided with the date of the Jewish Passover, the fourteenth day of Nisan, and a defence of this 'Quartodeciman' observance is attributed to Melito of Sardis (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IV.26.3). Yet his surviving treatise *On the Pascha* is remarkable, not for this, but for its imagery, its rhythms and its axiom – which governs all later Christian typology – that Christ is the Word who supersedes the Law.[16] Melito is one of five apologists from Asia who are said to have petitioned Marcus Aurelius: the safest deduction is that apologetic had now become a fashionable genre. Delivery of such speeches would have been perilous

[13] Bauer (1971) 60–94.

[14] Gresswell (1834) 312–13 notes the sudden celebrity of this deity where Christianity was strong. It was cursed by a false devotee of Asclepius: Lucian, *Alexander* 25.

[15] All depends on the date of the proconsulate of Statilius Quadratus (*Mart.* 21). Barnes (1967) is not so exhaustive as Lightfoot (1889) 628–702 or Gresswell (1834) 243–337. The meaning of 'great sabbath' is intrinsic to these discussions.

[16] Hall (1979). Jews in Sardis may have influenced the *De Pascha* more than, e.g. those of Ephesus influenced Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*: J. M. Lieu (1996) 209–35.

in those circumstances in which it was not superfluous, and we must look with scepticism on itineraries devised by modern scholarship which enable the patient autocrat to hear all five within the space of months.[17]

Justin, at the end of his *First Apology*, quotes two rescripts, one from Hadrian and one from Antoninus Pius, which are said to have been written in reply to pagan demands for greater powers against the Christians in this region. Both imply that Christians should not be brought to court unless they are guilty of other crimes, and say that calumnious imputation of Christianity should be punished. Of the two, that of Hadrian, which is addressed by name to the governor and says little in praise of Christians, is more likely to be authentic. The pagan miracle-hunter, Phlegon of Tralles, found a place for those of Christ and fixed the date of the eclipse which coincided with his death (Origen, *c. Cels.* II.14, 33, 59). The first ecclesiastical historian was Papias, to whom we owe our account of the tombs at Ephesus, our earliest information on the order and composition of the three synoptic gospels, and a sensuous picture of the world to come.[18]

4. Phrygia

Remains of Christianity in this region are prolific, the most famous being the epitaph of Abercius Marcellus, which celebrates his labours in defence of orthodoxy.[19] Yet the epithet Cataphrygian became the exclusive label of the heresy that Abercius had striven to put down. It had two heads – the raptures of Montanus, who purported to speak with the voice of the Holy Spirit, and the prophecies of Priscilla and Maximilla, which were inspired by the appearance of the celestial Jerusalem above their native village of Pepuza. No doubt there were other outbursts, for such charismatic movements never have a single origin, and modern attempts to find one are as vain and contradictory as those of Epiphanius and Eusebius.[20] There were certainly many prophets claiming immediate inspiration and resistant to the clergy of Asian bishoprics, who undertook to cure them by a form of exorcism. In the light of these excesses, Christian leaders learned to argue that a seer cannot be inspired by God unless he retains possession of his mind (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* v.18.9 etc.).

We ought not to exaggerate the anomalous characteristics of the Montanists: we have no evidence of female leadership or a general expectation of the End.[21] No weight can be attached to the tradition that Montanus

[17] Though Grant (1988b) may be right to suggest that a change in Marcus' policy was inspired by the revolt of Avidius Cassius.

[18] Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* III.33.3; Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* III.36 and 39; Jerome, *De Viris Illustr.* 18.

[19] Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* 276–7 notes that he found co-religionists even beyond the Euphrates in Nisibis.

[20] Freeman-Grenville (1954); but cf. Barnes (1970).

[21] Students of historiography may contrast Trevett (1996) with Schepelern (1929).

was a eunuch of Cybele; it was another sect who endeavoured to impose a Christian *gnosis* on a pagan hymn to Attis. The Naassenes, professing to hold no deity in such reverence as Man and the Son of Man, were none the less prepared to find epiphanies of Christ in Attis, Adam, Dionysus and Osiris (Hippolytus, *Ref.* v.6–11). Their thesis of a constant peregrination of the soul between the waters of the intellect and matter was supposed to be the key that would unlock the common store of truth in every sacred text.

5. *Bithynia and Pontus*

The churches of Bithynia may have been among those addressed in Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, but their history begins for us with the governorship of Pliny (*c.* A.D. 112). Suspicious, like his master Trajan, of all nocturnal assemblies, he responded to anonymous reports of Christian gatherings by summoning the accused and asking whether they were, or ever had been, members of the sect (*Ep.* x.96.3). Those who would neither deny nor renounce their faith were put to death, or, if they were citizens, imprisoned (*ibid.* 4); denial would not suffice unless accompanied by a sacrifice to the emperor and a curse on the name of Christ such as no Christian should be able to pronounce (*ibid.* 5). For all his harshness, Pliny was unable to discover any mischief in the Christians, except that their religion was a fable, and that they met at dawn to share a meal, forswear wrongdoing and sing a hymn to Christ 'as to a god' (*ibid.* 7). He says nothing, and so presumably heard nothing, about an official hierarchy. Two things appeared to justify his measures: the contumacy implied by a refusal to perform sacrifice, and the revival which he had brought about in the trade of local shrines (*ibid.* 10; cf. Acts 19:25).

Pliny thinks it possible – and he alludes to previous trials – that the profession of Christianity, *nomen ipsum*, is a capital offence (*Ep.* x.96.2). Trajan agrees, though he does not name the author of this doctrine or speak of a *religio non licita*. He takes for granted Pliny's method of trial by *cognitio*,[22] but tempers his severity by stating that the Christians are not to be sought out, that the defendant has the right to meet his accuser in open court and that denial with sacrifice should be sufficient for acquittal (*Ep.* x.97.2). His rescript thus confirmed, but neither created nor explained, the legal status of the Christians; its unusual publication may have been partially responsible for the clemency of his immediate successors.[23]

Pontus, according to Lucian's *Alexander* (25), was full of Christians by the middle of the second century, and here it was that Marcion drew the strongest of all dichotomies between suffering and salvation. The world

[22] On the legal process see de Ste Croix (1963) 17; Ramsay (1893) 216–17.
[23] It is cited by Tertull. *Apol.* 11.6, and from this by Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* III.33.3.

and the law, he taught, were the creation of a God who was just, not good, whereas the Father of Jesus Christ was good and, in the teeth of justice, sent his Son to redeem our spirits from a gaol that he had had no part in building. The flesh was irredeemable, and the powers who rule the body were deceived by a phantasmal crucifixion. Gnostic in his basic tenets, Marcion could not stomach the Gnostic allegories which justified the Old Testament; even his New Testament included only parts of our Pauline corpus and a short redaction of Luke. His churches, which were numerous, evinced a high degree of organization, and it is sometimes held that his teaching forced the episcopate to tighten discipline and define its canon.[24] It must be said, however, that he drew less fire than others from the episcopal theologians of the second century.

6. Greece

The heresies and dissensions which beset the church at Corinth in the time of Paul retained their vigour during the next half-century, to judge by the letter from Clement of Rome exhorting them to humility, mutual charity and a willingness to suffer for the faith. Clement speaks of presbyters in Corinth (*1 Clement* 1.3), but these are still identical with presbyters (*ibid.* 42). By the time of Marcus Aurelius there was a monarchic bishop, Dionysius, who wrote as a metropolitan to Sparta, Crete and Athens, encouraging the latter when they had lost their own bishop in a persecution (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IV.23). The successor of this bishop, one Quadratus, has been tentatively identified with the Quadratus whose 'Apology', composed in the reign of Hadrian, based its argument on the miracles of Christ.[25] If this was the first apology, the second too was ascribed to an Athenian philosopher Aristides,[26] whose work survives in three discordant versions. If the Greek papyrus is the original, he subjected his fellow-countrymen to a new form of ethnography, which ignored the polar distinction between barbarian and Hellene. Instead the world is divided into Christians, Jews and polytheists, with a further subdivision of the last into Greeks, Egyptians and Chaldaeans. This treatise may be one source of the notion that the Christians were a 'third race', which remained incomprehensible to the Latin-speaking Christians of the west.[27]

Also styled an Athenian and a philosopher in the manuscripts of his work is Athenagoras, whose *Legatio* is addressed to Marcus Aurelius and to Commodus under titles which suggest a date of A.D. 176. It mimics the petitions that were publicly delivered to the emperor by the orators of this epoch on behalf of their own communities; but here the community is

[24] Discussed in Blackmann (1948).
[25] See Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IV.3 on the apologist and IV.23.2 on the bishop.
[26] Geffcken (1907) 1–96; Grant (1988a) 35–9.
[27] Harnack (1908) 266–78: the origin is probably Matt. 21:43. Cf. n. 52 below.

the worldwide church, and the plea is not for bounty but for tolerance. The length of the speech, its mixture of different genres and the admission of criminality implied in the very act of composition all suggest that the inscription to the emperors is a fiction.[28] Nevertheless Athenagoras may have hoped that pagan readers would be moved by his attempt to show from Plato and the Orphics that the Christian faith was genuine philosophy, and closer to the heart of the Greek tradition than the rites and myths of civic polytheism. Christianity means for Athenagoras a belief in the uniqueness and transcendence of the deity, who generates his logos as his instrument in the making and salvation of the world (*Legatio* 10 etc.). His defence of the resurrection was postponed to another treatise.[29] From his denial that Christians practised cannibalism or incest, we may infer that he had read Fronto, or else had heard some tidings from Lyons (see below).

7. Egypt

Despite the legendary visit of St Mark, and a spurious letter ascribed to Hadrian in the *Historia Augusta* (*Firmus* 8), there remains no credible record of an episcopate in Egypt before the end of the second century. Eusebius professes to know the names of all the bishops, but he attaches no biography to any before the beginning of the third century. The thesis of Walter Bauer, that the earliest Christianity in this province was of the kind that we call Gnostic, is not weakened by discoveries of Old Testament papyri,[30] since Gnostic writings also made much use of the Jewish canon. The Rylands papyrus, dated to about A.D. 130 is proof of an early readership for the Gospel of John in Egypt,[31] but its first interpreters seem to have been Basilides and Heracleon, both notorious masters of heterodoxy. By the end of our period, there was a catechetical school in Alexandria, whose teacher Pantaenus is considered orthodox; but the influence of Philo was always certain to encourage speculation, and Pantaenus' pupil Clement speaks of heretics like Theodotus with qualified respect.[32]

'Gnostic', as Clement's usage shows, was not the appellation of one sect, still less a pejorative term applied by adversaries, but an epithet that was likely to be claimed by anyone teaching a higher doctrine. Gnosis was the necessary perfection of faith or *pistis,* but, since different teachers gave it a different content, each was apt to declare that his own was true and that of others spurious. As a noun which in itself means simply 'knowledge', it could signify the recondite erudition that was needed to decipher a sacred text, or a private revelation from angelic powers, or a secret tradition handed

[28] Buck (1996) argues this position well against Schoedel and Barnes.
[29] Though Grant (1954) denies him the extant treatise *De Resurrectione*.
[30] Roberts (1979) 49–53 against Bauer (1971) 44–59.
[31] Roberts (1935) and (1938). [32] On the school see Van den Hoek (1997).

down by pupils of the Apostles. It was only the partisans of a particular variety of gnosis who alleged that other kinds were being hawked about as all-sufficient nostrums of salvation, without reference to moral principles or way of life.

Basilides, for example, was accused of fatalism, but also of the incompatible tenet that our sufferings in the present life are the penalty of our misdemeanours in a previous one.[33] He was said to have reckoned martyrdom among these punishments, and to have treated the denial of Christianity under persecution as a mark of gnosis. Nevertheless, it is not denied that his teaching had produced at least one martyr. Charges of promiscuous copulation at the love-feasts of the Basilidean Christians must be treated with suspicion, as must accounts of even lewder practices introduced by his disciples Isidorus and Carpocrates (Clem. *Strom.* III.1–2 ff.). According to the system that Hippolytus ascribes to Basilides (*Ref.* VII.21–7), the realm of matter is indeed condemned but it is pervaded by the Spirit, the third emission or filiation of God the eternal Father, whose task it is to liberate and perfect the willing soul. Suffering is the means of this perfection, but it comes from the benign will of the deity, not from error, chance or the evil government of the world.

Equally monistic is the system that was generally ascribed to Valentinus, though details may have been added by Heracleon, Ptolemaeus and Theodotus.[34] In this myth, the Godhead is a fullness or *pleroma* of thirty aeons, temporarily diminished by the transgression of its lowest element, Wisdom or Sophia. The offspring of her passion is first matter, then the ignorant (though not wholly wicked) Demiurge, who aspires to create a spiritual universe, but only contrives to entomb the human soul in a godless world. This fable is most probably an allegory of the soul's fall from the contemplation of God into a futile cult of idols, or in Israel's case an equally superstitious veneration of the Law in its application to the flesh. The Demiurge is the God of Plato's *Timaeus,* but also the Creator as erroneously conceived by Judaism. Paul had spoken of Christ as one who came in the 'fulness of time' (Gal. 4:4; cf. I Cor. 10:11), who was bodily inhabited by God's fullness (Col. 2:9), and who became through death the firstfruits of redemption (I Cor. 15:20 ff.). The Valentinian myth draws on these passages when it states that it is Christ who redeems Sophia and divides the world from the Godhead by his cross. Newly discovered texts, which may originate from the Valentinian school of the second century, insist upon the efficacy of the cross in our salvation and do not entirely exclude a resurrection in the flesh.[35] There would therefore be no basis for denying the occasional necessity of martyrdom, and Valentinus appears to be an

[33] Lohr (1996) is now the definitive treatment.
[34] Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I–II; Hippolytus, *Ref.* II; Clem. *Excerpta ex Theodoto*; Markschies (1992).
[35] For the *Gospel of Truth* and *Epistle to Rheginus*, see Robinson (1990) 38–57.

early and sound expositor of Paul. The Valentinians differed from the main church in attempting to explain what the bishops handed down by rule, and the Commentary on John composed by Heracleon was probably the first such treatment of a Christian text.

8. Italy

Paul's letter to the Romans is our first evidence of a Christian congregation in that city. No bishop or other official is indicated, and some readers have surmised that it was addressed to a loose sodality of churches.[36] It is striking that Ignatius makes no reference to a bishop when he writes to Rome, as he does in his correspondence with the Asiatic churches. Nor do Clement and Soter (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IV.23.7), when they write as acknowledged leaders of the Roman Christians, give themselves an ecclesiastical title. Both are included in Irenaeus' catalogue of presbyters who are said to have succeeded one another without a break since the first was ordained by Paul and Peter (*Adv. Haer.* III.3.2); here again, however, there is no word of a bishop, still less of any monarchical role for Peter. Even after the end of the second century, Hippolytus could rail against 'Pope' Callistus (as we call him) in a fashion that has led some modern interpreters to see Callistus rather as the chairman of a synod than as the sole head of the Christians in Rome.[37]

The writings of Paul and Clement show that Greek was the earliest language of the Christians in the capital. It may be that a substantial Jewish party is implied by Paul's Epistle (e.g. Rom. 2:17), but in that case it must rapidly have ceased to be an influential presence. We hear in the second century, however, of a group of Asiatics who claimed Polycarp's authority for celebrating Easter at the time of the Jewish Passover, rather than, with other Roman Christians, on a fixed day of the week (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* V.24). 'Pope' Victor, who attempted to impose a uniform custom, is traditionally said to have been an African, as well as the first Latin speaker in his office; the remonstrance of Irenaeus was, however, written in Greek. While the Gaulish bishop appealed to Victor's predecessors, Polycrates of Ephesus, who also intervened, thought it enough to say that Quartodeciman practice had been followed by the Asiatic martyrs. Latin-speaking churchmanship was always inclined to respect the office more than the man who held it; it ought not to surprise us, then, that Greek was still the language of the fiery and insubordinate Hipploytus in the following century. The cosmopolitan origin of the Christians in the capital appears to be one of the arguments employed by Irenaeus when he states that the doctrine held by the Roman presbyters can be taken as an index of the universal Christian belief.[38]

The leaders were not distinguished from the laity in the imperial persecution under Nero, which appears to have been confined to the metropolis,

[36] Minear (1971). [37] Brent (1995). [38] Abramowski (1977).

and followed the fire of A.D. 64 (Tac. *Ann.* XV.44). Sought out on vague charges of superstition and misanthropy, those who confessed were punished by spectacular and painful executions; the confession must have been of Christianity, not incendiarism, as popular opinion continued to blame Nero for the fire. The event created a precedent – though not, perhaps, a legal definition – for subsequent acts against the Christians; the next of these to be documented anywhere is probably Domitian's execution of his kinsman, the consul Titus Flavius Clemens on a charge of 'atheism' (Dio, LXVII.14). Eusebius records a persecution under this emperor (*Hist. Eccl.* III.17–20 ff.), and Clement's letter, which speaks of the tribulations of his church, may be a further testimony. If his name suggests a connexion with the consul, it can only be that of a freedman, not a son.[39]

The episodes under Nero and Diocletian show that Christians in Rome were hated chiefly for their refusal to participate in civic religious practice. Loyalty to the rulers was enjoined, however in Paul's Epistle (Rom. 13:1ff.), and also in that of Peter (I Peter 2:13), which purports at least to be written from the capital. Such injunctions may, of course, be prompted by a tendency to insubordination; but Clement, when he compares the church's structure with that of an army (*I Clement* 37), must surely be assuming that compliance with the secular authority was the norm.[40] Ignatius' plea to his Roman brethren not to intercede for him (*Rom.* 4.1) suggests that the persecution of Domitian had not robbed the local community of its influence in high circles; at the same time his martyrdom in the amphitheatre shows that the pagan citizens had not lost their appetite for Christian blood.

The high esteem in which this church was held by other Christians is evident from the deference of Ignatius and from the manner in which Clement dictates his peace to the Corinthians. The *Shepherd* of Hermas (*c.* 140) assumes that Clement would have had the authority to distribute an inspired text to the other Italian cities (*Visio* II.4.3). Hermas is the first author to assert that those who lapse under persecution may obtain remission after suitable penances; a readiness to absolve the most heinous sinners was to become a notorious hallmark of the Roman episcopate. Irenaeus (*c.* 180) accords a *principalitas* to the Roman see (*Adv. Haer.* III.3.2), which, later at least, was thought to entail a primacy *de jure* for its bishop. The Muratorian Fragment, often dated to the end of the second century, suggests that Rome was now making official use of Latin and had a canon of the New Testament very similar to our own.[41]

[39] Though now unfashionable, the arguments of Lightfoot (1890) 16–62 and Ramsay (1893) 259–74 remain impressive. 'Atheism' ought not to mean Judaism, and authorities for the persecution are numerous: Lightfoot (1890) 104–15.

[40] The attempts to usurp the 'rain-miracle' of 177 (Tert. *Ad Scap.* 4.6) assume that Christians would be willing to be soldiers.

[41] See Henne (1993) versus Hahneman (1992).

Among the Christian teachers who are said to have been active in the metropolis were Marcion, Valentinus and Justin Martyr.[42] The last, less reserved than other apologists, describes the eucharistic and baptismal rites and reveals that the church pays worship to Father, Son and Holy Spirit (*1 Apol.* 61 and 65–7). His so-called *Second Apology* describes the tribulations of an Alexandrian woman who had tried to divorce her reprobate pagan husband (*2 Apol.* 2). The summary justice used against her friends may be contrasted with the efforts of the magistrate to avert an execution in the Christian report of Justin's martyrdom; we should not forget that Christians had their reasons to exaggerate both the severity of the judge on some occasions and the temptations that could be posed by his benevolence on others. Justin wrote his *Apologies* with impunity, though we cannot tell whether he published them or sent them to the emperor; according to Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* IV.16.1), he was tried when a deposition had been laid against him by the Cynic Crescens. The flagrant immoralities of philosophers are the main theme of the *Oration to the Greeks* by his pupil Tatian; even in Rome, this Syrian would not call himself a Greek. The more eirenic Justin had maintained that all the wisdom of the pagans was derived from Hebrew prophets (*I Apol.* 44–5). The opposite view is asserted, *c.* 180, by the pagan Celsus, whose *True Logos* is the work of a Roman, even if it was not produced in Rome.[43] The new religion, Celsus argued, is indeed a novelty, which originates in a breach with Judaism (Origen, *c. Cels.* I.28ff.). He regards both immorality and magic as characteristic of all Christians (*ibid.* VI.24, 39–41), though occasionally he sneers at the diversity of sects (V.61 ff.). Their lack of culture is a constant theme (V.14 ff.), though some at least are citizens from the higher social orders, or else it would be pointless to upbraid them with their failure to take up offices of state (VIII.75).

9. Africa

There are few remains of African Christianity before A.D. 200, but by the end of our period there was evidently a flourishing population, for Tertullian in A.D. 197 declares that persecution has multiplied their numbers (*Apol.* 50.13) and that pagans are often startled by discovering the conversion of a neighbour (*ibid.* 3.1). African Christianity displayed a unique strain of fanaticism, shunning the very names of pagan gods in daily intercourse, and sometimes ready to goad a reluctant magistrate to the work of persecution. In later times the chief bishopric in Carthage was more docile to the empire than the Numidian seat of Cirta; it was a citizen of the latter town, the rhetorician Fronto, who accused the new faith of Thyestean banquets and Oedipal

[42] For Marcion, see Epiphanius, *Panarion* XLII.1.7; for Valentinus, Tert. *De Praescr. Haeret.* 36.
[43] Chadwick (1953) xxviii–xxix. For recent bibliography see Francis (1995) 131–7.

copulations.[44] If he was inspired by stories told about the local cult of Saturn, he may be reckoned as the father of those (unprovable) modern theories which contend that the Christianity of this region was a baptized variety of the native worship.[45]

Fronto's claims are put into the mouth of a pagan speaker in the *Octavius* of his fellow-African Minucius Felix (*Oct.* 31 etc.). If this work is, as some suppose, the first specimen of Christian Latinity, it must fall within our period.[46] It is typically economic in its exposition of doctrine, and, though it is set in Ostia and cast in the form of a Ciceronian dialogue, it betrays the irascible temper of the African, for the pagan speaker's assault on Christianity is provoked by the animadversions of Octavius on the formal cult of idols (*Oct.* 3). It is no surprise that the prophecies of Montanus gained a following in Africa, where, if we may take Tertullian as a typical adherent, the new age of the Spirit was believed to entail new fasts, an end to sexual relations even in marriage, and an inexorable rigour in ecclesiastical discipline. There is, however, no sign of formal schism, though there were local separations; Tertullian does not seem to think that the office of a bishop is discredited by attacks upon his person; and women, though their prophecies and visions were taken seriously, were given no institutional authority in the church.[47]

Tertullian's polemics suggest that dualistic movements had become prevalent in the region: the *Adversus Marcionem*, in five books, is his *magnum opus*, and the obscure Alexander cited in his treatise on the incarnation must be a local figure (*de Carne Christi* 16.1). Montanists and Gnostics (if we may call them such) had common traits: both styled themselves 'pneumatics' and disparaged the less enlightened class as 'psychics', and both believed that the natural condition of the soul was one of bondage to the powers of death and sin. Demons rule the world of Minucius Felix and Tertullian, though they merely inhabited that of Apuleius; the Christians, however, state that numerous confessions have been elicited from these supernatural agents by the rite of exorcism (Min. Fel. *Oct.* 26–7; Tert. *Apol.* 22–3 ff.). A doctrine of inherited corruption is attested by Tertullian (*De Carne Christi* 16), though baptism of infants had not yet become a universal rule.

10. Gaul

This period yields few remains of Christianity in Gaul, and the only bishopric certainly attested is that of Lugdunum or Lyons.[48] Its congregation

[44] Champlin (1980) 64 allows priority to Fronto.
[45] Frend (1971); on the indigenous cults of Saturn, see Rives (1995) 142–50.
[46] Daniélou (1974) 189–208; but cf. Buizer (1925). [47] Rankin (1995).
[48] Harnack (1908) 451–63 doubts that Lyons was the only Gallic bishopric at this time.

appears to have been Greek-speaking for the most part, and it may have been the daughter of an Asiatic church, for when it became the victim of a popular eruption it was to the 'churches of Asia and Phrygia' that it sent its famous record (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* v.1.3–2.8). The event was inspired by a rescript from an emperor to the governor of Gaul (v.1.39); the emperor is generally believed to be Marcus Aurelius, and the year 177.[49] The rescript was perhaps inspired by the caluminies of Fronto; certainly the governor appears to have been spurred on by a mob who expected to convict the church of 'Thyestean banquets and Oedipal copulations' (*Hist. Eccl.* v.1.11). Roman citizens were tortured and beheaded (v.1.43), and, despite the recommendation of the emperor (v.1.42), those who renounced their faith received no pardon (v.1.27 and 41); here at least, the church accepted those who purged a previous apostasy by seeking martyrdom. In general the victims chose to make a secret of their doctrines v.1.25): we do not know whether the one who said that Christians ate no bloody meat (v.1.21) was speaking also for the Asians who were caught up in this storm (v.1.14, 45 ff.). Those who survived flagellation were thrown to beasts in the amphitheatre (v.1.33ff.): the letter immortalized the slave Blandina, whose courage under various tortures wearied and amazed her persecutors (v.1.14, 36, 52 ff.). The death of the aged bishop Pothinus was the greatest blow (v.1.24).

He was replaced by Irenaeus, a friend of the martyr Polycarp and so perhaps a migrant from the east (*Adv. Haer.* III.3.4). The greatest theologian of his day, he induced the Roman church to allow its Asiatic visitors to keep their own date for Easter, and he undertook the refutation of every Christian doctrine that diverged from the episcopal consensus. Where Marcion, Valentinus and Basilides slighted matter and denied the resurrection of the body, Irenaeus retorted that the body too belongs to the image of God and must partake of the resurrection (*Adv. Haer.* v.1). Creation and the law are part of the work that culminates in our redemption through the incarnation of Christ, the eternal Word and Son of God. The evil in the world springs not from matter, but from the waywardness of Adam, who bequeathed to his descendants both mortality and the frailty that makes us liable to sin (IV.38).

Irenaeus denies predestination and suggests that God intended us to arrive at good through experience of evil (*Adv. Haer.* IV.37–9). Yet, even while he affirms that man was not created perfect, he insists that sin is culpable, and can be expiated only by the sacrifice of Christ (v.17 ff.). He defends the fourfold canon of the gospels (IV.11.8), and cites most of our New Testament, including Revelation and the Pastoral Epistles. He was the first to appeal to the ecumenical consensus of the bishoprics as a test of orthodoxy (III.2.1), but he cannot be held to blame for the modern usage of

[49] Frend (1965) 23 n. 1; but cf. Gresswell (1834) 303.

the word 'Gnostic', which implies that all the world-denying heresies were at one in their aims, beliefs and opposition to the episcopate.[50] In asserting the catholicity of his own faith, Irenaeus supplies the only evidence from this period for the spread of Christianity to Germany and Spain (1.10.2).

The death of the emperor Commodus would seem to have no significance in church history,[51] yet it marks the watershed between the age in which we have only sporadic anecdotes of churches and the age in which a history of 'the church' becomes conceivable. The reason for the change was perceived instinctively by the crowds who took advantage of imperial hostility to the Christians in the later Antonine era: the bishop was now the primary, and sometimes the only, object of attack. Whereas a pagan cult would owe its vigour to the patronage of a civic luminary, the survival of Christianity depended on the presence of the whole in every part.[52] Even while the bishop was supreme in his congregation, his office bound him to every other bishop, in opposition to the world and to parochial dissent. Ignatius in Antioch, Polycarp in Smyrna and Pothinus in Lyons were feeble shadows of the patriarchs who withstood the great persecutions of the next century; but even so, their meagre correspondence and their obituaries are our two great sources of knowledge in this period. It is as true of Rome and Antioch as of Carthage and Alexandria that wherever the episcopate was lacking in resolution or authority, there is no continuous story to be told.

[50] Edwards (1989a).

[51] The martyrdom of the Alexandrian 'Apollonius Saccas' in an Asian persecution under Commodus is probably fictitious.

[52] For Christians as the soul of the world see *Epistle to Diognetus* 6; the authorship and provenance of this short tract are (appropriately) unknown.

CHAPTER 18

CHRISTIANITY IN THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES

CHAPTER 18B

THIRD-CENTURY CHRISTIANITY

GRAEME CLARKE

Third-century Christianity has to be read against its polytheistic context. Not only that. If we are to appreciate what it may have been like to be a Christian in this century, we also need to have some idea how idiosyncratic it may have been in fact to belong to the Christian following (the social setting) as well as how influential was the Roman state in the lives of individual Christians (the political setting). To map these two co-ordinates may help us to see third-century Christians from our vantage point – insofar as we are able to reconstruct those settings. It goes without saying, however, that this reconstruction need not necessarily be the same as how third-century Christians themselves perceived their own place in their social world and how they construed their relations with the Roman state: the rhetoric of self-identification and self-representation need not coincide with our description.

The first section, accordingly, attempts to trace quickly the geographical coverage of Christianity in the third century,[1] whilst the second section deals with what we know of Christians' relations with the Roman state – the persecutions which formed a backdrop to the mental lives of many Christians even if physically they may have been little affected by them. But the possibility of persecution was not the obsessively dominant feature in their lives as many have construed it to be: the third section surveys the literary and intellectual life of third-century Christianity.

1. GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

Until the Great Persecution and its aftermath in the early fourth century brings to light invaluable evidence for the geographical spread of Christianity (and impressionistic anecdotes, in places, illustrating the depth of

[1] The classic treatment is von Harnack (1924).

that spread), we are forced to be content, for much of the preceding century, with extremely fitful testimony. And given the erratic nature of that surviving testimony it is very difficult to gain any sense of the *progressive* spread of Christianity that may have been taking place over that century. This is a difficult enough task for the urbanized areas of the empire: it is even more difficult outside the urban areas in the unnewsworthy villages, hamlets and farms of the countryside (where the bulk of the population of the empire eked out their living).[2]

1. Britain

Tertullian's grandiloquent flourish, at the beginning of our period, declaring that, amongst other extravagances, the remoter parts of Britain, as yet unsubdued by the Romans (*Britannorum inaccessa Romanis loca*), have already been made subject to the Christ (*Adv. Iudaeos* 7.4 (CCSL. II.1354)) ought to be construed as pure rhetoric, Britain being established in the literary tradition as at the ultimate periphery of the western world. We should conclude the same of Origen (*In Ezekiel Hom.* IV (*PL* XXV.723)), dated to towards the middle of the century, where Britannia along with the Mauri illustrates the verse *Omnis terra clamat cum laetitia*. By the end of the Constantinian reign, however, there are indeed participating British bishops in councils outside Britain – and they can be praised later for their orthodox stance in the Arian controversy (Athan. *Hist. Arian. ad Mon.* 28 (*PG* XXV.725)). But we have no notion of the scale of the communities they administered. The evidence is tellingly exiguous: three bishops are first attested in the (variable) recensions of the Council of Arles (314) – representatives from York, London and (?) Lincoln along with a priest and a deacon (representing perhaps a fourth see: Cirencester?).[3] But on the scanty evidence available to us Christianity must have been a marginal exotic religion in Britain over this period.[4]

2. The Gauls

Since the martyrdoms at Lyons (witnessing, predominantly foreign, Christian communities at Lyons and Vienne) in the 170s (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* V.1ff.) and the writings of Irenaeus, there is scarcely a word about Christians in all the Gauls until the 250s. There is, it is true, another rhetorical flourish in Tertullian (*Adv. Iudaeos* 7.4 (CCSL II.1354): 'the diverse tribes of the Gauls

[2] There is a valuable discussion in Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* 287ff.; for a more triumphalist assessment, Frend (1967).

[3] See the discussion of Mann (1961).

[4] Frend (1968) 37–49; Thomas (1981) 42ff.; Watts (1991) 9ff. The (later) traditions of British martyrs (Alban, Aaron, Julius), are impossible to date.

have been subjugated to the true Christ') as well as in Hippolytus (*Philos.* 10.34 (*GCS* Hippolytus III.292)) – the *Celtoi* figure in a long list of 'Greeks and barbarians' expected to listen to the true doctrine just expounded: these help little to flesh out any sense of the progress of Christianization amongst the indigenous population, despite Irenaeus' preaching among the Celts (*Adv. Haer.* I, *pr.*3 (SC 264.24)) and his bearing witness that there were churches 'among Celts' (*Adv. Haer.* I.10.2; cf. III.4.2 (SC 264.158, 211.46)). But by the mid-third century the evidence of Cyprian, *Ep.* 68 (254/5) reveals the establishment of other bishoprics apart from Lyons (already known from Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* V.1.29), not only at Arles (Cypr. *Ep.* 68.1.1) but also a number of other sees (the *coepiscopi* of *Ep.* 68.1.1, 2.1). There is a distinct suggestion of an established synodal organization among those bishoprics (*Ep.* 68.1.1, 2.1, 3.1) and there is a hint (only that) of rival groups clustered around Lyons (*Ep.* 68.1.1, 2.1) and a further grouping in Provence centered on Arles (*Ep.* 68.3.1). But we gain clearer knowledge by the early fourth century: to the Council of Rome (313) were summoned by imperial command *inter alios*, Reticius, Maternus and Marinus, bishops of Autun, Cologne and Arles (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* X.5.19, Opt. I.23 (CSEL XXVI.26), app. III (CSEL XXVI.205): *quosdam episcopos ex Galliis*), and at the Council of Arles the following year among the forty-three churches (predominantly western) represented were sixteen Gallic bishoprics (some with attendant clerics), their geographic locations being concentrated, as one might expect, in the more urbanized districts of southern Gaul and the Rhône valley. The lack of even legendary bishop-lists for most of these sees suggests that the majority had become established only within the last generation or two.[5] But whilst it is tempting to posit organizational growth for the Gallic church in the second half of the third century, our impressions may simply be based on the vagaries of available evidence. And there is one piece of corroborative evidence: there were 'church buildings' (*conventicula*, τῶν ἐκκλησίων τοὺς οἴκους), which Constantius did (or did not) pull down in Gaul under the terms of the First Edict of the Great Persecution (Lact. *DMP* 15.7; Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.13.13), issued in 303. Beyond that we can scarcely go.[6]

3. The Germanies

In the Germanies, Belgica and Raetia our information is even more fugitive: we could expect by the end of the period some Christian communities or

[5] Duchesne (1907) 6ff. At the Council of Nicaea (325) bishop Nicasius from Die attended, a bishopric not represented at Arles.

[6] Arnob. *Adv. Gentes* I.16 with unhelpful rhetoric reckons the Christians dwelling in Spain and Gaul as *innumeri*. In the later fourth century, Martin of Tours can more realistically be depicted in north Gaul as working in territory where 'virtually no-one had received the name of Christ', Sulpic. Sev. *Vit. S. Martini* 13.9 (SC 133. 282): *ante Martinum pauci admodum, immo paene nulli in illis regionibus Christi nomen receperant.*

cells in at least the major military towns and colonies. Trier (a Roman colony and then imperial residence) did indeed send a bishop to the council of Arles (314) (as did Rheims): the church building there was small and needed rebuilding by the time Athanasius visited it during his banishment, 335–7 (Athan. *Apol. Ad Constant*. 15). As for the Germanies, apart from rhetorical generalizations found in Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer*. 1.10.2 (SC 264.158): 'nor are the faith and traditions of the churches established in the Germanies in any way different') and once again, in Tertullian (*Adv. Iudaeos* 7 (CCSL II.1354)), in the company of Sarmatians, Dacians and Scythians, as well as, this time, Arnobius (*Adv. Gentes* 1.16: Christians to be found among the Alamanni, Persians and Scythians), the hard datum consists simply of the bishopric of Cologne (the bishop being present at the Council of Rome, 313 (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* X.5.19) and with a deacon at the Council of Arles, 314). We should have to conclude on this evidence that Christianity was only weakly established in the whole of this territory.

4. Spain

The churches in the Iberian peninsula have similar weak testimony until the mid-third century. Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer*. 1.10.2 (SC 264.158)) and Tertullian (*Adv. Iudaeos* 7.4 (CCSL II.1354): *Hispaniarum omnes termini*) can both include, for rhetorical effect rather than factual information, the provinces of Spain as witnesses to the wide spread of the one faith (marking the western limits of the inhabited world before the great Ocean). It is only with Cyprian, *Ep*. 67 (datable to the pontificate of Stephen, 254–7) that we are able to view some particulars: bishoprics are attested as established up in the northwest (Legio-and-Asturica) as well as down in the southwest (Emerita), with a further community at Caesaraugusta towards the northeast of the Peninsula. Not only that. It can be claimed that at the appointment of Sabinus as bishop the custom was followed of having neighbouring, comprovincial bishops (*episcopi eiusdem provinciae proximi quique*) either present themselves or with their views represented by letter (§§5.1f.). A number of further bishoprics can therefore be safely conjectured as having been by now established in order to accommodate this assertion (with certitude, at least, for Tarraco where bishop Fructuosus was martyred in 259). Indeed, that three so widely separated communities as those named in this letter can be found acting together (opposed by other bishops – *aliqui de collegis nostris,* §9.1) suggests that the Spanish churches have by now well-developed lines of communication among themselves – and very probably they have met together from time to time in some form of provincial synod, convened to discuss communal issues.

At least half a century later they did so meet at Iliberris (Elvira), most likely as not shortly before the outbreak of the Great Persecution. In the

received tradition there attended representatives from thirty-seven Spanish Christian communities, nineteen delegations being headed by bishops (among them being bishop Ossius of Corduba, destined for fame, or notoriety) and eighteen sending presbyters only: twenty-five of the thirty-seven came from Baetican churches, the province in which the council was held – this may not necessarily, therefore, indicate a special concentration of Christianity in southeast Spain. But what does come as a total surprise is the content of the eighty-one canons illuminating a remarkable permeation of Christians into provincial society at all levels. The churches found it necessary not only to draw up a wide range of regulations – no fewer than twenty-six – on sexual mores; they also found it necessary to draw clearer lines of demarcation between Christians and Jews (*can.* 16, 49, 50, 78), orthodox Christians and heretics (*can.* 16, 22, 51), Christian and heathens (*can.* 15, 16) (including various forbidden professions – charioteers and *pantomimi*, *can.* 62 – or activities, e.g. gambling, *can.* 79). But, most revealingly, they had occasion to legislate on the behaviour of landowners (*can.* 40) and slave-owners (*can.* 5, 41), and on the cases of Christians who occupied the office of chief magistrate of a city (*can.* 56), who took up local priesthoods (*can.* 55), who looked on at public sacrifices on the Capitol (*can.* 59) or contributed garments for public religious processions (*can.* 57), or who even held the provincial high-priesthood of the imperial cult, the flaminate (*can.* 2–4). The degree of secularization surprises: Christianity has become domiciled in this region. Ought we to presume the same for southern Gaul extrapolating from this evidence?

5. *The Mediterranean islands*

(a) Sicily

From *Ep.* 30.5.1 in the Cyprianic corpus (written by Novatian in the name of the presbyters and deacons of Rome in late summer 250) we learn that a letter had gone from Rome to Sicily counselling prudent deferral of the question of reconciling the lapsed: that tells us that the Decian persecution was active in Sicily amongst the Christian community. This is valuable testimony for the history of the church in Sicily; apart from the (fortuitous) fact that St Paul's ship put in to Sicily on its way to Puteoli (Acts 28:12f.), the only notice we have which might conceivably indicate the presence of Christianity in Sicily prior to this witness is Clement of Alexandria's teacher who came from Magna Graecia along with Pantaenus, 'the Sicilian bee', (see Clem. *Strom.* 1.1.11; cf. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* v.11.4). Hierarchy is firmly recorded for the early fourth century (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* x.5.21ff.: bishop Chrestus of Syracuse attended the Council of Arles along with a deacon, Florus) as is the church generally (cf. Eus. *Mart. Pal.* (S) 13.12). It is highly doubtful whether the fact

that Porphyry composed his work against the Christians whilst established in Sicily (cf. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.19.2) need tell us anything.[7]

(b) Sardinia

Sardinia has even thinner an ecclesiastical history for this period. Apart from Christians sent to the mines of Sardinia (Hippolytus, *Philos.* 9.12; *Catal. Liber. s.v.* Pontianus; *Chron. Min.* I.74f.) we know of one bishop (Quintasius), plus a presbyter, of Cagliari, who attended the Council of Arles (314). Polytheism may well have long dominated there.

(c) Crete and Cyprus

Crete, on the other hand, is entirely unrepresented over our period (no bishop even at the Nicene council) – despite second-century testimony for Christian communities established at Gortyn (with a bishop) and 'other churches of Crete', including Cnossus which had by then a bishop also (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IV.23.5, 23.7f.). That is not untypical of our third century ignorance. Of the Aegean and Ionian islands, Rhodes, Cos, Lemnos and Corcyra sent bishops to Nicaea: we know no more. Cyprus, despite the Apostolic period missionary work (Acts 13.5ff., 15.39f.), is, again, without testimony for the third century: three bishops – from Paphos, Salamis and Trimithus – attended Nicaea, but there must have been established by then a number of other dioceses as twelve Cypriote bishops attended the Council of Sardica (Athan. *Apol. Contr. Arian.* 50).[8] But whilst we can reasonably surmise from this sample that there were Christian *conventicula* on at least the major islands, especially if they lay on regular sea-lanes, we are nevertheless compelled to rely on conjecture.

(d) Italy

At the beginning of the third century the church of Rome still retained many characteristics derived from its immigrant past, displaying a mixture of languages and ethnic cultures (but dominantly Greek), the mélange of traditions being reflected in the second-century dispute over the date(s) computed as proper for the celebration of Easter. It was not until the mid-third century that Rome produced in Novatian a Latin-writing theologian – and it was at this time also that the papal epitaphs in the papal crypt in the catacomb of Callistus began to be inscribed in Latin. Novatian's third-century predecessor Hippolytus, as the second-century writers before him, had all composed in Greek.

Our best statistics for the mid-third-century church in Rome are famously provided by the pope Cornelius (*ap.* Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.43.11)

[7] For the early history of the church in Sicily: Pincherle (1964–65); Garana (1961) 197ff.

[8] Christian confessors were sent to hard labour in Cyprus during the Great Persecution, Eus. *Mart. Pal.*(S) 13.2.

claiming 'that there are forty-six presbyters, seven deacons, seven subdeacons, forty-two acolytes, fifty-two exorcists, readers and doorkeepers, above fifteen hundred widows and persons in distress, all of whom are supported by the grace and loving-kindness of the Master'. The context of this claim needs to be appreciated. Cornelius is asserting (to Fabius of Antioch) – against the pretensions of the anti-pope Novatian (whom Fabius was inclined to favour) – that he is in command of *the* church in Rome. We must suppose that there were other Roman clergy, additional to those in the following of Cornelius, who had accompanied Novatian into schism. The full tally of Christian clergy will have been therefore higher than Cornelius' 154. And these calculations do not reflect either the many heterodox Christian groups by now established in Rome (such movements tending to gravitate to Rome).

Division into districts (reflected in *Liber Pontificalis* XXI [Fabianus] *hic regiones dividit diaconibus*, XXVI [Dionysius] *hic presbyteris ecclesias dedit et cymiteria et parrocias diocesis constituit*), the acquisition and maintenance of separate Christian burial-grounds (notably Calepodius', Callistus', Praetextatus', reflected in *Liber Pontificalis* XVII [Callistus], Hippol. *Philos*. 9.12), the construction and upkeep of Christian shrines (notably those of St Peter on the Vatican, of St Paul on the *Via Ostiensis* and at S. Sebastiano ad Catacumbas on the *Via Appia*) as well as the evidence for church places of assembly and an elaborate Mediterranean-wide network of communications (maintained by means of letter of communion) – all these point to the Roman church constituting a significant and well-organized minority group within the urban community of Rome by the mid-third century. Certainly half a century later Maxentius found it politically prudent to avoid rousing the opposition of the Christians of Rome (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.14.1; Opt. I.18): by then the minority had grown to a size and status that could not be overlooked without cost. The extent of the charitable services alone suggest a broad-based community. Even so it would be unwise to posit too deep a penetration into the conservative ranks of the upper levels of Roman society. Of course the public presence of the Christian church in Rome was transformed by the lavish donations of Constantine, and the elaborate building programme undertaken of funerary chapels, martyria and basilicas proclaimed at once imperial largesse and ecclesiastical triumph.[9]

In the same letter to Fabius of Antioch Cornelius reports on a synod of Italian bishops convened in Rome in 251: it was attended by sixty bishops and a still larger number of presbyters and deacons (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.43.2). Regrettably we have lost the catalogue Cornelius appended to his letter consisting:

[9] See Pietri (1976) 3–96 for a valuable summary.

of the bishops present at Rome who condemned the stupidity of Novatus, indicating at once both their names and the name of the community over which each one presided; and those who were not present, indeed, at Rome, but who signified in writing their assent to the judgement of the aforesaid, he mentions the names and, as well, the city where each lived and from which each wrote.

(Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.43.21)

Given the absentees and the fact that Novatian also had episcopal supporters (reduced by Cornelius in caricature to three gullible, rustic and simpleton bishops 'from a small and insignificant part of Italy', *ap.* Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.43.8ff.), we would be safe in conjecturing upwards of 100 Italian bishoprics by the mid-century. On the available evidence – including the fifteen who attended the Council of Rome (313) – they were concentrated in lower and central Italy rather than in the north. In upper Italy, Milan and Aquileia alone are known for certain (Councils of Rome and Arles), but we may reasonably conjecture communities already in the early fourth century at Ravenna, Brescia and Verona also (all soon to be represented by bishops at Sardica): but Christianity was but sparsely established over this terrain.

(e) Moesia, Pannonia, Noricum, Dalmatia

Despite a strong process of Romanization and urbanization (conditions that appear to have favoured a sympathetic reception to Christianity, or at least were more likely to lead to the recording of its reception), knowledge of the spread of Christianity into these regions is scanty. Nicaea provides us with two bishoprics for Moesia, Sardica (Protogenes) and Marcianopolis (Pistus), and one for Pannonia (Domnus: see unspecified). Victorinus, bishop–theologian from Pettau, indicates another Pannonian community and Diocletianic martyrdoms provide further witness (e.g. *Mart. Dasii:* Durostorum in Moesia). There are also likely to have been bishoprics in Noricum (represented later at Sardica). Dalmatia had very early contacts with Christianity (e.g. II Tim. 4:10) but little more is known of any communities established there. Altogether we have to be content with these tokens of knowledge and imagine a scatter of churches but with no sense of their numerical strength nor of how far there was any extension beyond Christian cells in urban centres into the countryside.

(f) The Balkans

Greece, the scene of concentrated missionary endeavours in the apostolic age, certainly continued to maintain a spread of Christian communities but, as often elsewhere, we gain little impression of their size. Athens,[10]

[10] Despite the fact that Origen found the Christian community in Athens congenial to visit and to write there (Origen, *c. Celsum* III.30, Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.32), Athens persisted long as a strongly polytheist city: Frantz (1988) 19ff.

Thessalonica and Corinth would be the most frequently mentioned (the latter two appearing especially flourishing) but it would be consistent with our knowledge to surmise that the total Christian population was pretty thinly spread throughout the peninsula. Chance testimonies suggest, however, that the spread, if thin, was still broad: by the course of the second century, for example, we have attested Thessaly (Larissa: Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IV.26.16 (Melito)); the Peloponnese (the Lacedaemonians: Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IV.23); Thrace (Debeltum and Anchialus: Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* V.19.3) and the Nicaean lists confirm other sites (e.g. Stobi, Thessalian Thebes, Euboea) with further possible glimmers of light at Nicopolis in Epirus (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.16.3) and Byzantium (Tert. *Ad Scap*. 3.4). The attendance lists of Nicaea also reveal some penetration into the Black Sea and Crimea (bishops Theophilus of 'Gothia' and Cadmus of Bosphorus).

(g) The African provinces

Knowledge of Christianity in Africa comes to us, as it were, fully formed, in the late second century, with the Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs (180) followed by the voluminous literary output of Tertullian (197+). Our ignorance of any second-century background highlights how reliant we are on Eusebius – and how limited was the knowledge he could obtain on western church affairs. As in contemporary Rome, there is initial evidence of a Greek-speaking component[11] but that is quickly lost to our view, neither throughout the century do we have any hint of a Punic element. On our present testimony we have a Latin-speaking church, with by mid-century its own accepted Latin version of the Bible, and its liturgy conducted in Latin.[12] And Tertullian shows himself fully aware of contemporary religious issues and currents, ready to engage in major theological debate often whilst attacking perceived heretical teachings (e.g. Marcion, Hermogenes, Valentinians, Praxeas) and open to the pull of Montanist revivalism. This is no isolated ecclesiastical community as the third century begins.

Tertullian is notoriously triumphalist in his claims of the spread of Christianity (e.g. 'Such are our numbers, amounting to almost a majority in every city', *ad Scap*. 2.10 (CCSL II.1128)).[13] But the closest statistic we can gain is that of the seventy African bishops claimed to have convened

[11] Tertullian composed a Greek version of several of his works (*de Spect*., *de Bapt*., *de Virg. Vel*., *de Cor. Mil*.) and Jerome, *de Viris Illustr*. 53 refers to the lost *de Ecstasi* (cf. *op. cit*. 24, 40), a work ultimately in seven books (but a Latin version only is known). Perpetua addresses the bishop Optatus and the presbyter Aspasius in Greek (*Act. Perp. et Fel*. 13.4 (Musurillo (1972) 122), and the angels intone the Sanctus in Greek (*op. cit*. 12.2 (Musurillo (1972) 120). See further Barnes, *Tertullian* 67ff., 253f., 265f.

[12] Cyprian accepts his scriptural text as it stands; Tertullian is prepared on occasion to criticize the version he has before him. Barnes, *Tertullian* 276ff.; Fahey (1971).

[13] Tert. *Ad Scap*. 3f. (CCSL II.1129ff.) attests Christians in Numidia and Mauretania as well as in the proconsular towns of Thysdrus and Hadrumetum: to which add Uthina (*De Monog*. 12.3 (CCSL II.1247)).

under Agrippinus, bishop of Carthage (?220s or 230s),[14] to be followed by the ninety bishops who met under Cyprian's predecessor Donatus (earlier 240s: Cypr. *Ep.* 59.10.1 (CCSL IIIC.353)) and then the eighty-seven signatories of the council meeting in autumn 256 (bishops loyal to Cyprian's stance against recognizing heretical baptism). Whilst this is remarkable enough to give us a notion of the numbers of the prosperous African small towns and centres that had a Christian *conventiculum* by mid-century – in excess of 100 is a very safe conjecture – that unfortunately tells us little of the relative size of such communities despite Tertullian's stridently iterated assertions. The distribution, however, is relatively clear (thanks to the *Sent. Episc.* LXXXVII): sparse in the Mauretanias (as also in Tripolitania) but clustered closely in the fertile tracks of Africa Proconsularis and the populous centres of Numidia (where at least twenty-five locations are identifiable).[15] Tertullian and Cyprian certainly attest a high level of literary competence – indeed in the case of Tertullian, brilliance – and the delicately mannered and cultured apology of the *Octavius* (*c.* 230) by Minucius Felix in all probability reflects the polite circles of Cirta (though its literary setting is Rome and Ostia). But these three writers seem to have few in the way of peers: certainly some of Cyprian's correspondents reveal much lower standards of literary competence.[16] We simply do not have the grounds for painting too sanguine a picture of the social levels to which Christianity may have reached generally over the century in the region, despite its remarkable geographical spread. Nevertheless this is a highly organized church, with a strong metropolitan leadership based in Carthage (though regional councils could also be held) with a structured clerical hierarchy and an elaborate system of charitable support.

The nearest snapshot we have of a typical African Christian community is right at the beginning of the fourth century: the congregation at the major Numidian town of Cirta.[17] The clergy consists of a bishop and of at least 2 presbyters, 2 deacons, 4 subdeacons, 7 lectors and in excess of 6 *fossores* ('grave diggers') as well as *seniores*: there is a church house (*domum in qua christiani conveniebant*) which has also a well-equipped *triclinium*. There is also a cemetery (*area martyrum*) which has a *casa maior*. The church paraphernalia in addition to chalices, lamps, lampstands, candelabra and

[14] Aug. *De Unico Bapt.* 13.22 (CSEL LIII.21), *c. Cresc.* III.3.3 (CSEL LII.412); cf. Cypr. *Ep.* 71.4.1 (CCSL IIIC.521).

[15] Consult Maier (1973). By the 330s, Donatists could muster no fewer than 270 bishops: Aug. *Ep.* 93.10.43 (CSEL XXXIV.2.486f.).

[16] Notably *Epp.* 21, 22, 26, 78, 79 and some of the *sententiae* of *Sent. Episc.* LXXXVII. See Saxer (1984) 257ff. The emphasis on the exceptional status of Perpetua is studied (*Vibia Perpetua, honeste nata, liberaliter instituta, matronaliter nupta*, *Act. Perp. et Fel.* 2.1).

[17] Opt. *App.* 1 = *Gesta ap. Zenophil.* (ed. Zwisa, CSEL XXVI.185ff.): text and French translation also in Maier (1987) 214ff. (English in Edwards (1997) 150–69). See also Duval (2001).

other gold, silver and bronze items also had in store 82 women's tunics, 38 veils, 16 men's tunics, 13 pairs men's shoes and 47 for women, and 19 rustic *coplae* =?capes (safely presumed to be donations for charitable handouts?).[18] This congregation also possessed as scriptures one unusually large *codex* (*codicem unum pernimium maiorem*: a lectionary?), as well as 30 other *codices*, 2 smaller *codices* and 4 fascicules (*quiniones*). The professions of two of the lectors are given: one is a *sarsor* (marble-cutter), the other is a *grammaticus* (*professor Romanarum litterarum*) whose father was a local decurion and whose descent was indigenous *origo nostra de sanguine Mauro*. One of the *fossores* describes himself as an *artifex* ('artisan'). In the court proceedings we also hear of a successful fuller, Victor, who could afford a donation of 20 *folles* and there also figures the Carthaginian Lucilla, a wealthy and influential woman of the highest class (*clarissima femina*) who could contribute no fewer than 400 *folles*. Throughout it is assumed such gifts to the church are properly to be distributed to the *pauperes*, little old women (*aniculae*), the indigent (*populus minutus*) or simply the *populus* (=?*populus dei*) – and not to be pocketed by the clergy as bribes. There is little reason not to assume that this sort of ecclesiastical establishment with this sort of (modest) social mix was not by now duplicated – scaled proportionate to population – throughout similar urban centres of Africa.[19]

(h) Arabia

It is difficult to gauge how far Christianity may have spread beyond the hellenized cities of the region, but the presence of six bishops at Nicaea (from Bostra, Philadelphia, Dionysias, Isbounta, Sodom and an obscure Beritaneus), a wholly Christian village (near Madaba) in Eusebius' *Onomasticon* (Cariathaim/Caraiatha)[20] and a fully developed synodal system by mid-century suggest no inconsiderable spread at least to the north of the province. The fact that early in the century the governor of the province could summon Origen from Alexandria for discussion may tell us more about the governor himself and the growing status of the Christian philosophy (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.19.15), but his seat of government, Bostra, was soon to have, towards mid-century, a controversial bishop, Beryllus, prominent for his writings (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.20.2) whose christological speculations

[18] Why the disproportion in men's and women's items? More indigent men – or simply more women with cast-off clothing to donate?

[19] Can some local religious tensions also be detected? The (discredited) clergy are charged with stealing casks and their contents (sour wine: *acetum*) from the local temple of Serapis. Note also the informative *Acta Purgationis Felicis* (Opt. *App.* II in Maier (1987) 174ff.) attesting to (destroyed) Christian *basilicae* (= meeting halls) at Zama and Furnos as well as at Abthungi (also described as *locum ubi orationes celebrare consueti fuerant*); Abthungi has, in addition, *areae* (= burial grounds) *ubi orationes facitis* (date: 303). Note, too, Ferrua (1977) 225ff. (early fourth-century *basilica dominica* at Altava).

[20] Cariathaim/Caraiatha (ed. Klostermann (1904) 112.14–16).

stimulated at least one synod attended by 'a large number of bishops' (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.33.2), to be followed by another 'no small synod' (on the status of the soul after death, Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.37),[21] to both of which Origen (and others) came and spoke. Rome could correspond with (and send frequent aid to) this church (Dionys. Alex. *ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.5: on Novatianism, later 250s) and in the following decade Maximus, as bishop of Bostra, was to play a prominent role in the dispute with the teachings of Paul of Samosata (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.28.1). This church, whatever its size and the depth of its penetration, is no ecclesiastical or theological backwater.[22] But we cannot even glimpse any adoption of Christianity in the more southerly and remoter reaches of this area in the third century.

(i) Syria

Antioch, the provincial capital, shows every indication of being a Christian stronghold exemplified by the celebrated *canon* 6 of the Council of Nicaea which recognizes (obscurely) the special and traditional rights of the see of Antioch (like Rome and Alexandria) over adjacent provinces. Hence the piquancy of the scandal that its bishop in the later 260s, Paul of Samosata, when he should have been giving his fellow bishops spiritual leadership, is arraigned by them instead for his heterodox christological views – and his offensive and secular high life-style (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.30). Paul no doubt cut a prominent figure in this society: the church was a visible (and sometimes noisy) part of the life of the city (the rival bishops appealing to the emperor Aurelian to settle the issue of the ownership of the 'house of the church' after the deposition of Paul, Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.30.19).[23] Antioch was also the scene for a series of regional synods convened to deal with the controversial issues of the day – in the 250s, Novatianism and the rebaptism dispute (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.46.3 and VII.5 – the provinces of Cilicia, Cappadocia, Galatia 'and all the provinces that border on these', Pontus, Bithynia, Palestine, Arabia, Mesopotamia as well as Egypt were involved) and in the 260s the series of meetings on the teachings of Paul, attended by a 'countless' number of bishops, along with presbyters and deacons (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.28.1; cf. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.30 – Cappadocia, Pontus, Cilicia, Galatia, Palestine, Arabia being specifically mentioned, and Egypt being invited, Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.27.2; cf. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.30.2).

[21] There is every chance that the debate between Origen and the bishop Heracleides took place in Arabia as well (note esp. *Dispute with Heracleides* (Scherer (1960) 10.18). Among the bishops present are named Heracleides, Demetrius, Philip (and, probably, Maximus and Dionysius) and *Dispute* 10.22 mentions a second Heracleides and his predecessor Celer.

[22] Jerome, *Ep*. 33.5 rather implies a gathering of the bishops of Palestine, Arabia, Phoenicia and Achaea, who combined to defend Origen against otherwise universal condemnation (*exceptis Palestinae, et Arabiae et Phoenices atque Achaiae sacerdotibus in damnationem eius consentit orbis*).

[23] The classic study is Millar (1971).

Moreover the Antiochene church continued its tradition of theological writing and biblical scholarship, producing Serapion (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* v.12)[24] and Geminus (Jerome, *de Viris Illustr.* 64) earlier in the century,[25] to be followed later in the century by the *rhetor* Malchion (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* vii.29.2; Jerome, *de Viris Illustr.* 71) and the learned Dorotheus (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* vii.32.2ff.) and Lucian (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* viii.13.2; ix.6.3; Jerome, *de Viris Illustr.* 77 and especially Suda *s.v.* Λουκιανός). But Antioch was not the only Syrian see to be able to boast of erudite Christian teachers and scholars: nearby Laodicea, for example, managed to detain the learned and eloquent Anatolius (from Alexandria) to be its bishop (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* vii.32.6ff.). However, an increase in figures of prominence does not necessarily imply increase in overall figures.

A little over twenty bishops from Syrian towns attended Nicaea (from widely scattered locations, from the coast to the Orontes valley and beyond, to the Euphrates).[26] It is noteworthy that there attended, additionally, two Syrian *chorepiscopi*, but it is difficult for us to have much notion how far this church may have penetrated into the village communities of Syria and into the Semitic-speaking levels of its population. For what it is worth Paul's fawning followers are described as including bishops 'of the neighbouring country as well as towns' *ap. Hist. Eccl.* vii.30.10 (τῶν ὁμόρων ἀγρῶν τε καὶ πόλεων). But what highlights our ignorance of this penetration is the chance discovery of the church-house of Dura Europus (destroyed in the 250s), well down the Euphrates, as well as a fragment of the Greek *Diatesseron* of Tatian there. This was, in part, a military town – its population is therefore to some degree somewhat exceptional – but the general inhabitants seem to have been highly multi-cultural, though Greek certainly dominated. Can we safely presume similar modest Christian communities scattered throughout the province? It is worth observing that the Christian meeting-place was not nearly as capacious nor nearly as sophisticated in its artistic pretensions as the Jewish synagogue nearby in the same town. And the language the Christians wrote in was predominantly Greek.[27]

(j) Phoenicia

Further to the south, inland of the mountains, we do know that communities, with a bishop, were established by the time of Nicaea at Emesa,

[24] Note that Serapion can write rebuking the Christian community of Rhossos in Cilicia for their heterodox views (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* vi.12.2ff.).

[25] It is more significant for the status of Christianity than for the church at Antioch that Origen spent 'some time' there in the early 230s conversing with Julia Mamaea (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* vi.21.3f.).

[26] The see is not identified of the Syrian bishop who took his followers into the desert awaiting the Second Coming: Hippolytus, *In Dan.* 4.18 (early third century). For the attendance lists at Nicaea: Wallace-Hadrill (1982) app. i, 165f.

[27] Kraeling (1967). The Assembly Hall had a capacity to accommodate a congregation of between sixty to seventy persons: p. 109. The graffiti are recorded on pp. 89ff. (C. B. Welles).

Palmyra, Damascus and Caesarea Philippi (Paneas).[28] As so often, we catch our first glimpses of Christianity in these centres only from the activities of the Great Persecution. Thus from Emesa came the martyred bishop Silvanus (with two companions), oddly described as 'bishop of the churches around Emesa' (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.13.3), but also revealing the precious information that he had been bishop there for a 'full forty years' (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.6.1), that is dating back to the early 270s. And from Damascus we have the prostitutes (under compulsion) giving out tales of orgies 'in the very churches' (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.5.2). Over in the Beka'a valley we know nothing of any community at the great pagan cult centre of Heliopolis until Eus. *Vit. Const.* III.58, cf. Soc. *HE* I.18 (the construction of a large church-building under imperial patronage, with the installation of bishop, presbyters and deacons) – but our evidence attests long resistance to Christianity there (Soz. *HE* VII.15; Theodoret, *HE* IV.19 'Phoenician Heliopolis, a place where none of the inhabitants, who are all given over to idols, can endure so much as to hear the name of Christ').

It is, however, the cities of coastal Phoenicia, early exposed to Christian influence and open to lines of communication and the trade of ideas (they have long been 'hellenized') where we may feel Christianity has established a more significant presence. Certainly Ptolemais, Tyre, Sidon, Beirut and Tripoli (and possibly Antaradus (Coptic list) as well) were all represented at Nicaea. Ptolemais and Tyre had made a brief appearance (with bishops) long ago during the paschal controversy (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* V.25) and Tyre appears by mid-century rather as the leading bishopric of Phoenicia (Dionys. Alex. *ap. Hist. Eccl.* VII.5.1),[29] until, once again, these coastal cities re-emerge in our accounts of the Great Persecution – Sidon (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.13.3, the presbyter Zenobius), Beirut (Eus. *Mart. Pal.* 4.2f., Apphianus lived a virtuously Christian life there; cf. Theodoret, *HE* I.4 (bishop Gregorius)), Tripoli (Eus. *Mart. Pal.* 3, Dionysius; cf. Theodoret, *HE* I.4 (bishop Hellanicus)), and Tyre (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.13.3, bishop Tyrannion; *MP* 5.1, Ulpianius; *MP* 7.1, Theodosia; cf. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.7.1f., Egyptians at Tyre; cf. Theodoret, *HE* I.4f. (bishop Paulinus); Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* X.4f. (Eusebius' panegyric on the building of churches addressed to bishop Paulinus of Tyre 'by whose zeal and enthusiasm the temple in Tyre, surpassing in splendour all others in Phoenicia, had been erected.').[30]

But again, as so often, our evidence does not take us much beyond these major hellenized and urban centres.[31]

[28] Cf. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.17f. (the statues interpreted to be of Christ and the woman touching the hem of his robe, on view at Paneas).

[29] Origen died and was buried in Tyre (Photius, *Bibl.* 118 (92b)) in the course of the 250s.

[30] Note especially Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* X.4.37ff., 63ff. for a detailed description of this rebuilt church – in fact our earliest text describing a Christian church.

[31] But note *OGIS* 608: chance survival of an inscription reveals a Marcionite *synagōgē*, apparently led by a presbyter (Paulus), in 318/19 in the village of Lebada (Deir-Ali) south of Damascus. How far was this typical – or merely an isolated phenomenon?

(k) Palestine

Although Palestine was the homeland of Christianity and already the site, therefore, of pious pilgrimage,[32] impressions are that Christianity met with strong resistance, not only in towns with growing Jewish dominance, such as Tiberias, Sepphoris, Capernaum (cf. Epiph. *Panarion* 30.4), but also in thoroughly hellenized centres such as Gaza[33] (though note the seat of a bishop 'of the churches round Gaza', Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.13.5 = ?the port of Maiumas). Bishoprics there undoubtedly were – some eighteen or so Palestinian bishops attended Nicaea[34] – and there was early established a synodal organization (cf. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* V.23.3, late second century) but it is very difficult to gauge the size of the communities involved. Certainly Jerusalem retained some of its status as the site of Christian origins (cf. Firmilian *ap*. Cypr. *Ep*. 75.5 and later enshrined in Council of Nicaea, *can*. 7); it became a centre of Christian learning (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.20.1, the library of bishop Alexander; *P. Oxy*. III.412.59f., the *patria* of the cultivated Julius Africanus)[35] – and was destined to enjoy imperial munificence (Eus. *Vit. Const.* III.26ff.). Caesarea, the provincial capital, grew into an even more prominent centre of Christian scholarship (the sojourn of Origen, the school and library of Pamphilus). And chance notices such as 'many rulers of the country churches' (Eus. *Mart. Pal.* 1.3 – near Caesarea?), a confessor bishop 'in a small city of Palestine' (Epiph. *Panarion* LXIII.2.4), 'bishops administering the churches round Jerusalem' (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.11.2, early third century) remind us that spread, even if numerically thin, may well have been erratic.

Here statistics drawn from the snapshot sample of Eusebius' *Onomasticon* might provide some sort of guidance. He registers some thirty local and regional villages as being 'very large' (μεγίστη κώμη) and three as being large (κώμη μεγάλη). Of these thirty-three, seven are identified specifically as being Jewish, one only as being Christian (ὅλη Χριστιανῶν).[36] In addition he notes four other villages (size not designated) as being Jewish

[32] Melito *ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IV.26.14 (Jerusalem) *c*. 160s; Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.11.2 (Jerusalem), early third century; Origen *c. Cels*. 1.51 (the cave at Bethlehem); Pionius, *Mart. Pionii* 4.18ff.; Firmilian; Jerome, *de Viris Illustr*. 54 (*sub occasione sanctorum locorum Palestiniam veniens*); cf. later, Eus. *Demonstr. Ev*. VI.18.23; *Vit. Const.* III.25ff.

[33] Note the famous statistic in (the unreliable) Marc. Diac. *Vit. Porph*. 21: the original congregation in Gaza is given as 127 Christians when Porphyry took up his duties in 394, with idol-worshipping villages still near the city (ch. 17; cf. Soz. *HE* VII.15). Jerome's novelistic *Life of Hilarion of Gaza* is also instructive (*PL* XXIII.29ff.).

[34] Sources agree at least on Jerusalem, Neapolis, Sebaste, Caesarea, Gadara, Askalon, Nicopolis, Jamnia, Eleutheropolis, Maximianopolis, Jericho, Zabulon, Lydda, Azotus, Scythopolis, Gaza, Aila, Capitolias.

[35] Vieillefond (1970) 17 is unduly agnostic.

[36] References are to the edition of Klostermann (1904). Jewish: Akkaron (22.9), Anaia (26.9), Engeddi (86.18), Eremmon (88.17), Esthemo (86.21), Ietta (108.9), Thala (98.26). Christian: Ietheira (108.3). Should we deduce a strongly gentile population generally?

whereas there are two in this category described as 'wholly Christian'.[37] That is suggestive of the type of proportion – and the sparse scatter – that may have been found throughout the small towns and villages of the Palestinian and neighbouring countryside.[38] But the casual mention of a Marcionite bishop (Eus. *Mart. Pal.* 10.2) is a sobering and important reminder that rival Christian followers are largely excluded from our records.

(l) East of the Euphrates

Despite the strong impression influentially left by Eusebius, Christianity's boundaries were by no means coterminous with the Roman frontiers. It is clear, for example, that well before the Roman frontiers moved across the Euphrates in the later second century to claim the new provinces of Osrhoene and Mesopotamia, Christianity was already well established there, most notably in Osrhoenean Edessa[39] (witness Bardaisan (d. 222) and his son Harmonius)[40] – though, notoriously, some centres, such as Carrhae, long adhered to their traditional cults. Bardaisan himself is made to bear witness to the presence of Christians also in 'Parthia', 'Persia', 'Media', Hatra and among the 'Kushanians' (Bactria) in *The Book of the Laws of the Countries* (written in Syria in the early third century).[41] And, if nothing else, the life and missionary endeavours of Mani, self-styled as 'Apostle of Jesus Christ', and of his early disciples in the course of the third century are evidence enough of the receptivity to and rapid spread, both outside and inside the imperial boundaries, of a variation on the Judaeo-Christian message in the east.[42] No surprise, therefore, that Eusebius can cite a document on the paschal controversy from 'those in Osrhoene and the cities there' (*Hist. Eccl.* v.23.4, late second century), that by mid-century Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, can write (to Rome) well aware of the attitude of the church of Mesopotamia on Novatian (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* vii.5.2), that early in the next century Eusebius feels he can even describe Edessa as being entirely Christian (since the apostolic age!) (*Hist. Eccl.* ii.1.7), boasting an archive of documents, in Syriac, to prove it (*Hist. Eccl.* i.13)) and that the Roman frontier cities of Rhesaina and Nisibis as well as Edessa could be

[37] Jewish: Dabeira (78.6), Zif (92.21), Nineve (136.2), Noorath (136.25). Christian: Anaia (26.13; not = Eus. *Mart. Pal.* 10.2 (Anaia near Eleutheropolis)), Caraiatha (112.15 – near Madaba).

[38] The study of Goodman (1983) is invaluable on the Judaeization of Galilean village life. On the Golan, see Urman (1985) and Urman and Flesher (1995).

[39] Note the *Chronicle of Edessa*: the flood of 201 damaged 'the temple of the church of the Christians', presumably a converted church-house such as at Dura. Translation in Segal (1970) 24f. The Christian Julius Africanus clearly found court life at Edessa congenial in the company of Bardaisan (and others): *Cest. fr.* 1.20.28ff. (ed. Vieillefond (1970)). See also Ross (2001) ch. 6.

[40] On the (vague) whereabouts of the origin of Tatian: Millar, *Near East* 460.

[41] Trans. Drijvers (1965) 59ff. (cf. Eus. *Praep. Ev.* vi.10.46) and Drijvers (1966) 60ff. On Harmonius: Theodoret, *Haeret. Fab. Compend.* 1.22 (*PG* lxxxiii.372); Soz. *HE* iii.16.5ff.

[42] Lieu (1992) and (1994), esp. ch. 2. Gardiner and Lieu (1996) 146ff. For a convenient text and English translation of the Cologne Mani-Codex: Cameron and Dewey (1979).

represented by bishops at Nicaea.[43] Further afield, Constantine, as Christian emperor, is made to evince awareness that there abounded 'many churches of God among the Persians and that thousands of people were gathered into the fold of Christ' (Eus. *Vit. Const.* IV.8; cf. IV.13) – thus provoking suspicion of the loyalty of Christian subjects in Persia and leading to spasmodic persecutions there.[44] Eusebius can mention that one of the 'Persian bishops' was present at the consecration of the church in Jerusalem (*Vit. Const.* IV.43), and there is a persistent legend that some of these Persian Christians, notably the Greek-speaking ones (distinguished as 'Christians' versus 'Nazaraeans'), owed their origin to Christians who were among the deportees captured during the incursions of Shapur I in the 250s.[45] But we can also surmise that the movements of commerce across the permeable frontier zones and the extensive Jewish diaspora in the region may have further assisted the spread of the new religious ideas.[46] Certainly by the late third century Christians (and Manichaeans) were prominent and numerous enough to incur the ire of and suppression by the Zoroastrians.[47]

Overall, whilst details remain sparse, the early production of local language texts, martyr-*acta*, manuals and hymns (leaving aside how far, in some cases, they may be ultimately derivative from western sources) suggests churches that have managed to establish remarkably solid local followings.[48]

(m) Egypt

Egyptian Christianity emerges in the third century with strong intellectual (and indeed social) credentials, with the writings of Clement (pupil of Pantaenus) displaying broad erudition and addressing a cultivated and philosophically educated as well as (at least in some sections) a financially secure audience.[49] And this can be set against an intellectual context which

[43] For eastern representation at Nicaea see Wallace-Hadrill (1982) app. 1, 165f. Note the late third-century bishop from Mesopotamia, Archelaus, whose work in Syriac against Mani was translated, according to Jerome, into Greek (*De Viris Illustr.* 72).

[44] See Brock (1982); and Barnes (1985), elucidating Aphrahat, *Demonstration* 5. Note also Epiph. *Panarion* 1.42.1 claiming Marcionites are still to be found in Persia.

[45] For example, *Chronicle of Se'ert* 2 (ed. Scher (1908) 220f. with French trans.); English trans. in Dodgeon and Lieu, *Eastern Frontier* 297.

[46] Of course there are persistent legendary accounts of apostolic missionary activities outside the empire, e.g. Thomas to Parthia, Andrew to Scythia (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* III.1.1), Bartholomew to 'India' (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* V.10.3). For what it is worth, at the beginning of the third century Tertullian (rhetorically) has Christianity spread amongst 'Parthians, Medes, Elamites and those who dwell in Mesopotamia and Armenia' (*Adv. Iudaeos* 5.4 (CCSL II.1354)), whilst a century later Arnobius, *Adv. Gentes* II.12 has the Christian message heard 'in India, among the Seres, Persians and Medes'. On commerce with Persia, see, for example, *Expositio* 22 (mid-fourth century).

[47] The inscription of the Magian Kartir at Naqsh-i-Rustam (Sprengling, *Iran*). See Brock (1978), and (1971) on the distinction between 'Christian' and 'Nazaraean' (pp. 91ff.).

[48] For an overview, Millar, *Near East* 481ff.

[49] Especially observable in the *Paedagogus* and *Quis Dives Salvetur*.

had already produced much heady Gnostic speculation and writing (most notably Basilides and Valentinus) as well as many widely circulated apocryphal texts (e.g. Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Mary, The Wisdom of Jesus Christ).

The vignette which we have of the young Origen in Alexandria early in the century is telling – and bears witness to this continuing tradition of open theological inquiry – as recounted (defensively) by Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* VI.2.13f.):

> But when his father had been perfected by martyrdom, he was left destitute with his mother and six smaller brothers, when he was not quite seventeen. His father's property was confiscated for the imperial treasury, and he found himself, along with his relatives, in want of the necessaries of life. Yet he was deemed worthy of divine aid, and met with both welcome and refreshment from a certain lady, very rich in this world's goods, and otherwise distinguished, who nevertheless was treating with honour a well-known person, one of the heretics at Alexandria at that time. He was an Antiochene by race, but the lady we have mentioned kept him at her house as her adopted son, and treated him with especial honour. But although Origen of necessity had to consort with him, he used to give clear proofs of his orthodoxy, at that age, in the faith. For though very great numbers, not only of heretics but also of our own people, were gathered together with Paul (for that was the man's name), attracted by his apparent skilfulness in speech, Origen could never be persuaded to associate with him in prayer, keeping the rule of the church, even from boyhood, and 'loathing' – the very word he himself uses somewhere – the teachings of the heresies.
>
> (trans. J. E. L. Oulton)

Dionysius, who later took over the direction of the catechetical school from Heraclas, can report in mid-century – again, defensively (to Rome) – that he had a vision urging him to 'read all things that may come into your hands' and claiming that it was by dint of reading (and refuting) heretical works that he had actually found his faith (*ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.7.2f.). And he goes on to record in the same epistle his episcopal predecessor's [Heraclas'] expulsion of Christians who 'while still reputed members of the congregation were charged with frequenting some false teacher' (*ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.7.4). Alexandria was undoubtedly the site of much theological discussion and debate – but also not without its attendant tensions, all this being well exemplified in the scholarly activities and personal history of the great Origen himself.

The impressive series of Christian teachers and writers in Alexandria that span the rest of the century – Dionysius (to whom Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* books VI and VII are in large part devoted), Theognostus (Photius, *Bibl.* 106.86b), Pierius (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.32.26ff.; Jerome, *De Viris Illustr.* 76; Photius, *Bibl.* 119.93af.) and Peter of Alexandria (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.32.31) – tends to dominate our perception of Egyptian Christianity. This is to some

degree due to the dominant cultural and administrative role that Alexandria itself played in Egyptian life with its reflection in the dominating, indeed authoritarian, role of the chair of Alexandria in the institutional life of the Egyptian church. The patriarchate is in formation.

It is salutary, therefore, to be reminded of the millenarian writings of Nepos 'bishop of those in Egypt': he had composed a work entitled 'Refutation of the Allegorists'. Not content with composing a refutation in two books in response ('On Promises') Dionysius went up to the Arsinoite *nome* 'where this doctrine had long been prevalent so that schisms and defections of whole churches had taken place', and there he held a three-day debate with the 'presbyters and teachers of the brethren in the villages (there being present also such of the brethren as wished)' (*ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.24). Likewise the churches in the Pentapolis, indulging in Sabellian speculations on the nature of the godhead, occasioned similar debate with Dionysius ('there came to me from either side both documents and the brethren who were ready to discuss the question') and the bishops required extensive written refutation (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.6; VII.26.1). Clearly, Egypt, Libya and the Pentapolis is a region where Christianity has appealed not just to the educated and the urban of Alexandria (whom Dionysius designates simply as οἱ πολιτικοί).

How deep that appeal had penetrated by the end of the third century is remarkably illuminated by the diffusion of Christian texts in middle and upper Egypt, displaying a wide range of reading among Christians literate in Greek in provincial Egypt (biblical, apocryphal, devotional, theological – and up-to-date with contemporary Alexandria, and beyond). Not only that: the production of Coptic Christian texts in the course of the third century brings to light what we can but dimly see otherwise of the Christian mission to the indigenous population[50] (such Christians being habitually designated by the urban Origen and Dionysius as 'Libyans' or 'Egyptians', as opposed to 'Hellenes'). These Coptic texts help to flesh out the picture we might derive from the *Life of Antony* (especially chs. 1f., 72f.): he is described as unlettered in Greek, and the biblical passages which he had heard in his home church at the village of Coma in the 260s had therefore been presumably turned into Coptic.[51] On this evidence Christianity has become remarkably diffused.[52] And whilst we cannot rely too literally on Eusebius' enthusiastic description of the droves of Egyptian martyrs during

[50] See, for a valuable survey, Roberts (1979); also Judge and Pickering (1977); Rousseau (1999) ch. 1.

[51] Jerome understood that the seven letters attributed to him had been *in graecam linguam translatae*: *De Viris Illustr*. 88). On these letters see Rubensen (1995).

[52] Note the lector Aurelius Ammonius of the former village church of Chysis (304): he is described as 'not knowing letters' (*P. Oxy*. XXXIII.2673). That would normally imply he did not know Greek and must have therefore read the lessons in Coptic. For doubts (not altogether persuasive): Wipszycka (1983). Aurelius Ammonius testifies that, apart from a bronze gate, his church possessed 'neither gold nor silver nor money nor clothes nor beasts nor slaves nor lands nor property either from grants or

the Great Persecution (they are described as μυρίοι in *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.8.1; VIII.13.7 and cf. VIII.7; IX.II.4), victims from this area on his testimony should be numbered in the very many hundreds, including 'those who were distinguished for wealth, birth and education and also for learning and philosophy' (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.9.6).[53] Christianity has managed to establish itself as a feature in this landscape,[54] Eusebius (*Praep. Ev.* III.5.5) being prepared even to claim that 'the majority of those in Egypt have already been released from this sickness [*sc.* of animal cults]':[55] the author of *Expositio Totius Mundi et Gentium* ch. 34 seems to testify otherwise.

Only a dozen bishops from Egypt and the Pentapolis are known in mid-century (from the writings of Dionysius of Alexandria). Some 22 bishops attended Nicaea and the schedule of Melitius to bishop Alexander attests 29 (Athan. *Apol. c. Arian.* 71). However, Athanasius can claim he had the support of 'nearly 100 bishops' from Egypt, Libya and the Pentapolis in the late 330s (*Apol. c. Arian.* 1, 71). This evidence certainly suggests a major leap forward, at least in terms of institutional organization, since the mid-third century: does the narrative in Antony's *Life* suggest the beginnings of a corresponding sea-change in popular religious adherence?[56]

6. The provinces of Asia

(a) Cilicia

Despite the Pauline mission and the close ties this region naturally had with Antioch and Syria generally, our knowledge of the third-century church here is meagre. In mid-century Helenus of Tarsus appears as the metropolitan of a Cilician synod of bishops ('Helenus at Tarsus and all the churches of Cilicia', Dionys. Alex. *ap.* Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.5.1; cf. VI.46.3; VII.5.3): by the time of Nicaea those churches numbered at least nine with one *chorepiscopus* in addition.[57] From the location of those bishoprics – and the

bequests'; i.e. the range of categories of possessions expected to be found in a church by this time. Epiph. *Panarion* LXVII.1.1ff. attests the ascetic and biblical scholar Hieracas, a bilingual teacher and writer in Greek and Coptic (*c.* 270–360).

[53] For further discussion on Egypt in the time of the Great Persecution, see below.

[54] Note that already by mid-century there could be sectional assemblies in the Alexandrian church (Dionys. Alex. *ap.* Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.11.17). By the end of the century, a *nome* capital like Oxyrhynchus could boast two churches, in the north and in the south of the town, *P. Oxy.* I.43, verso, col. i, l. 10; col. iii, l. 19. Observe, too, that before the third century was out Manichaean devotees had established themselves in sufficient numbers to attract attention from Christians and pagans alike (*P. Ryl.* III.469, Alexander of Lycopolis).

[55] Eus. *Demonstr. Ev.* VI.20.297b can even assert: 'Of all mankind it is amongst the Egyptians that the word of the gospel teaching has waxed strongest.'

[56] For attempts to measure that change Bagnall (1982) with the reservations of Wipszycka (1988). On Egyptian bishoprics in the early fourth century, see Martin (1979) 6–7.

[57] Viz. Tarsus, Epiphania, Neronias, Castabala, Flavias, Adana, Mopsuestia, Ageae and Alexandria Parva. On *chorepiscopi* in this region, see Mitchell, *Anatolia* II.70ff.

fourth-century sequel[58] – we can safely assume that Rough Cilicia was still largely untouched by the Christian mission.

(b) Cappadocia

Cappadocia has almost as slight a record for the third century. Early in the century the learned Alexander was translated as bishop from Caesarea (the metropolitan church) to Jerusalem[59] but the major figure known to us is Firmilian, bishop of Caesarea for over a quarter of a century (d. 268), a friend and correspondent of Origen's (they also exchanged visits) and who played a senior role in ecclesiastical affairs.[60] Seven Cappadocian bishops attended Nicaea[61] in addition to five *chorepiscopi* (the latter no doubt reflecting the scattered nature of much of the settlement pattern).[62] Apart from the presence of the leaders of the Cappadocian churches 'distinguished above all for learning and eloquence' at the dedication of the church at Jerusalem (Eus. *Vit. Const.* IV.43) we have to wait for later in the fourth century for any real sense of Christianity in this area.[63] But to judge by what little we know of the third-century bishops this was no cultural or theological backwater in the third century either.

(c) Armenia

To the north of Cappadocia, we hear of the church in the area of Armenia Minor first from a notice in Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.46.3. In mid-century Dionysius of Alexandria 'wrote to those in Armenia whose bishop was Meruzanes . . . on repentance'. This rather sounds as if Meruzanes may have been sole bishop in the region (at Sebaste?); but as the subject of penitence had become a major source of controversy in the aftermath of the persecution of Decius it also implies that there were Armenian Christians who had been caught up in the persecution. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.6.8 (obscurely) further implies that there were Christians in the area of Melitene also at the beginning of the Great Persecution (but was this now rather in the province of Cappadocia?).[64] But our most startling insight comes from the Testament of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste (under Licinius, ?early 320s,

[58] Fowden (1998) 540–1. Note also the Egyptian confessors sent to work in the mines in Cilicia during the Great Persecution: Eus. *Mart. Pal.* 10.1, 11.6.

[59] Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.11.1f.

[60] Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.46.3; VII.5.1; cf. VII.5.4; VII.14; VII.28.1; VII.30.4; and see further G. W. Clarke (1984) 250f.

[61] From Caesarea, Tyana, Colonia, Cybistra, Comana, Spania and (?) Parnassus.

[62] Note Christians captured among the victims of the Gothic raids (late 250s): Basil, *Ep.* 70 (*PG* XXXII.436); these included Christians from the village of Sadagolthina (near Parnassus), Philostorg. *HE* 11.5 (*GCS* 21 bis: 17). Firmilian *ap.* Cypr. *Ep.* 75.10 (CCSL IIIC.590ff.) attests country Christians also, including clergy (*unum de presbyteris rusticum, item et alium diaconum*: 230s): Origen, *In Matt.* 24.7 (*GCS* Origen 11.75 comm. ser. 39) may well refer to the same incident as Firmilian, adding the detail of the burning of churches (plural) of Christians blamed for a series of earthquakes.

[63] Mitchell, *Anatolia* II.67ff.

[64] See Kopeček (1974) 320–1.

Soz. *HE* IX.2). Greetings are sent to over a dozen different Christian communities (those places named are nevertheless all obscure) with the clear implication that there are Christian groups scattered throughout Armenian hamlets and villages serviced by presbyters and in some cases assisted further by deacons. Christian settlement in the countryside, it is well to be reminded, can be very erratic. How far was this replicated elsewhere? Satala as well as Sebaste sent bishops to Nicaea.

As for the kingdom of Armenia to the east we have to rely unfortunately on the legends associated with the evangelization of Gregory the Illuminator. All one can assert safely is that at the time of the Great Persecution Eusebius can regard these Armenians as Christians *tout court* (*Hist. Eccl.* IX.8.2; cf. Soz. *HE* II.8) and that Aristakes, said to be the son of Gregory, and Akrites attended Nicaea as bishops. But we really cannot form a reliable picture of the depth of evangelization by the end of the third century. Not only is this another example of our third-century ignorance – it also highlights how seldom in this century do we hear of proselytizing missionaries as the source of the spread of Christianity.

(d) Pontic region

Where we do hear of missionary activity in mid-century is in the adjoining region of Pontus along the Black Sea. But again it is in a difficult source, an encomiastic oration written by Gregory of Nyssa a full century after the events narrated and reflecting anachronistic ideals of the role, powers (spiritual as well as political) and status of bishops (as held by a bishop) in the late fourth century. So on many of the details of the life of the honorand of that panegyric, Gregory Thaumaturgus, we cannot securely rely. However, as in much of Asia Minor generally, this is a region early evangelized with second-century evidence ranging from individual cities like Sinope (whence Marcion, wealthy son of a bishop: cf. Epiph. *Panarion* XLII.1.3ff.) or individual bishops (Hippol. *Comm. in Daniel.* 4.19, ed. M. Lefèvre)[65] to general statements implying an established hierarchy and synodal capacity (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IV.23.6: Dionysius of Corinth writing to 'the church sojourning at Amastris and the other churches in Pontus': cf. *Hist. Eccl.* V.23.3 (paschal controversy)) and reflected also in non-Christian sources (Pliny, *Ep.* X.96; Lucian, *Alex. Abon.* 25; cf. 38).

The legendary stories of Gregory's missionary activities may well reflect traditional memories (palpably inaccurate!) of mass conversion throughout the region both in towns and countryside (but especially in the vicinity of Neocaesarea) over the generation or so after 240.[66] But Gregory's own status,

[65] A 'pious and humble-minded' bishop, the subject of millenarian dreams, induces brethren to 'abandon lands and fields', most of whom sold off their possessions: a rural bishop, perhaps?

[66] Famous is the claim that Gregory found but seventeen Christians in Neocaesarea, when he reluctantly agreed to be its bishop, and when he died he left unconverted but seventeen pagans (Greg.

and that of his brother Athenodore – wealthy, carefully educated, hailing from the local aristocracy of Pontic Neocaesarea, and seriously dedicated pupils and converts of Origen's[67] – is an accurate sign of the changing times: it is now possible for such men to find in Christianity a congenial and attractive alternative 'philosophy'. Both became Pontic bishops (Gregory of his hometown of Neocaesarea). And Gregory's so-called Canonical Epistle reveals him authentically in episcopal action, addressing a brother bishop (of Trapezus?)[68] in the aftermath of raids by Boradi and Goths in the early 250s and judiciously laying down orderly legislation in a disorderly world of rape, raiding, looting and abetting (by Christians) of the barbarian invaders and captors. By the time of Nicaea the region could send bishops from Amastris, Pompeiopolis, Ionopolis, Amasia (cf. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* X.8.15; *Vit. Const.* II.1f. (Licinius)), Comana (cf. Greg. Nyssa, *Vit. Greg. Thaum.* (*PG* XLVI.933ff.)), Zela, Trapezus and even as far away as Pityus.

(e) Bithynia

Nothing could illustrate more vividly our typical third-century ignorance than the province of Bithynia. It fades almost completely from our sight after the letter of Pliny (*Ep.* X.96, early second century) and a notice in Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* IV.23.4: letter of Dionysius of Corinth to the Nicomedians, late second century).[69] When it re-emerges to view in the time of the Great Persecution a century later, there are numerous Christians to persecute (e.g. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.9a.4f.), with Christians in the imperial service – soldiers, civil servants, eunuchs, slaves (Lact. *DMP* 14.3f.; 15.1f.; Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.6.; cf. *Oratio ad Sanctos* 25); Christians are judged to be worthy targets of serious polemical attack (Lact. *Div. Inst.* V.2.3ff.; V.2.12ff.; V.3.22; *DMP* 16.4 (Sossianus Hierocles)) and at Nicomedia famously there is already a church erected on high ground in full view of the imperial residence (Lact. *DMP* 12.3) – with Lactantius himself present as an observer. Clearly silence in our sources should not be read to imply that a quiet transformation has not been taking place on the religious landscape but we simply do not know how rapidly – or by what processes – it was occurring: the sequel, however, does suggest that the transformation has been considerable: nine Bithynian bishops plus two *chorepiscopi* were representatives at Nicaea.

Nyssa, *Vit. Greg. Thaum.*; *PG* XLVI.909 and 953): a claim refuted by the archaeological record (e.g. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* 530ff.; Mitchell, *Anatolia* II.53ff.).

[67] Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.30, Greg. Thaum. *In Origenem* esp. 5.56ff. (Crouzel (1969)).

[68] *PG* X.1020 (*can.* 1): note also 1040 (*can.* 6) with offending Christians to be sought out in the regional countryside. For an English translation, see Heather and Matthews (1991) ch. I.

[69] Origen was sojourning briefly in Nicomedia (240s ?), when he responded to Julius Africanus on the book of Daniel (*Ep. ad Jul. Afric.* 2.21: he is in the company of his patron Ambrose and his wife and children *ibid.* 24 (ed. de Lange, in Harl and de Lange (1983)).

(f) Lycia, Pamphylia, Isauria

Equal ignorance of third-century Christianity prevails in these southwesterly regions of Asia Minor before the Great Persecution, apart from bishop Neon and the lay-preacher Euelpis from Laranda (Isauria) in the earlier part of the century (*ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.19.18), and the writer (and bishop) Methodius, most probably of Olympus (Lycia), in the later part of the century.[70] However, inscriptional evidence (gravestones) from the borderlands of Isauria and Lycaonia, in the valley of the Çarşamba river, is certainly suggestive that there may have been strong Christian representation in this area before the third century was over (allowing all due caution over the dating of undated epitaphs).[71] And Nicaea can reveal from this territory no fewer than twenty-five bishops altogether (some thirteen of whom were from Isauria, including four *chorepiscopi*): we cannot safely assume that the spread of Christianity has been uniform.[72] Local cults and conditions will have been important inhibiting factors.

(g) Asia (Lydia and Mysia) and Caria

A similar pall of ignorance descends over this region during the third century in glaring contrast with the brilliant illumination provided for the second century by the writings of Ignatius, Polycarp, Melito of Sardis and the letter of Polycrates (*ap.* Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* V.24). This evidence, in combination with the Pauline mission, would justify us in assuming this region in the third century would be a heartland of Christianity, but astoundingly our only glimpse that might support such an assumption is in the account of the martyrdom of Pionios and his companions in Smyrna (A.D. 250: persecution of Decius).[73] There we encounter not only two presbyters (Pionios and Limnos) and the bishop (Euctemon),[74] but we are also reminded of the sectarian rivalries that have been splitting the communities everywhere. There figure also a Marcionite presbyter (Metrodorus) and a Montanist (Eutychian) – and there is heavy emphasis by Pionios and his followers that they are *Catholic* Christians. And the Jewish polemic of the document further reminds us of the diaspora context in which Christianity may have

[70] The (confused) testimonia on Methodius are well discussed by Musurillo (1958) 3ff. Methodius sets the scene for his dialogue 'On the Resurrection' in the house of the physician Aglaophon at Patara (*De Res*. I.1.1.): consequently evidence of a Christian presence there? Note that the martyr Apphianus (Eus. *Mart. Pal.* 4f.) came from a wealthy aristocratic family in Lycia (Gagae?).

[71] See the discussion in Mitchell, *Anatolia* II.58f.

[72] As usual there are variants in the attendance lists. I rely throughout, with no great faith, on *Patrum Nicaenorum Nomina* (Gelzer *et al*. (1898)). On the petition of the province of Lycia and Pamphylia attesting anti-Christian sentiment (*TAM* II.3 785, now *I. Aryk.* 12 (Arykanda)), see Mitchell, 'Maximinus'.

[73] See Robert *et al*. (1994). See however *MAMA* X.xxxvi–xl for some inscriptional evidence of Christians in the Lydo-Phrygian borderland.

[74] Note also the Christian woman from a village (Karine): *Mart. Pion.* II.2.

found itself throughout Asia generally: an integrated Jewry[75] might be inducive for the toleration – and indeed acceptance – of the Christian *secta*. Despite the silence of our sources, the subscriptions at Nicaea, however, confirm that there were continuing Christian communities at Ephesus, Smyrna, Sardis, Thyateira,[76] Philadelphia, Miletus as well as at least thirteen other cities.

(h) Galatia, Phrygia, Pisidia, Lycaonia

Were we obliged to rely on the surviving literary testimonies, our knowledge of Christianity in these regions of central inland Anatolia would be only marginally less exiguous. We would know of the strongly enthusiastic following that the Montanist movement, arising in Phrygia, won in the region (evidence enough of a significant Christian population) – and of the consequent reaction of the hierarchy to it (see Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* v.16ff.): hence the synodal meetings at Iconium (Pisidia) and Synnada (Phrygia)[77] (230s?) – 'in the most populous churches and the synods of the brethren, in Iconium and Synnada and in many places' (Dionys. Alex. *ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* vii.7.5; Firmilian *ap*. Cypr. *Ep*. 75.4) – and the earlier (condemnatory) document in circulation from Hierapolis (Phrygia) with 'the autograph signatures of many other bishops' (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* v.19). We would also know of various locations associated with the Montanist movement, revealing that Christianity has spread from urban settlements like Ancyra (Galatia: *ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* v.16.3) into some of the rural communities and districts like the Phrygian villages of Ardabav (*ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* v.16.7), Cumane (*ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* v.16.17), Pepuza and Tymion (*ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* v.18.2, 13) or small towns like Eumeneia (*ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* v.16.22). We begin to get a context for the anonymous small town (πολίχνη) in Phrygia where all the inhabitants, including all of its officials (λογιστής τε αὐτὸς καὶ στρατηγοὶ σὺν τοῖς ἐν τέλει πᾶσιν), as Christians, were burnt to death in the Great Persecution along with their meeting-place (*conventiculum*) (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* viii.11.1; Lact. *Div. Inst*. v.11.10).[78]

So far our meagre literary record goes. But it is in this region, for the first time to any significant degree, that the pre-Constantinian inscriptional record throws a remarkable flood of light on an otherwise dimly perceived landscape. The monuments come principally from Phrygia in the upper

[75] The central location of the synagogue at Sardis and the synagogue inscriptions from Aphrodisias (though their dating is controversial) are spectacular illustrations (see Reynolds and Tannenbaum (1987)).

[76] For a long period a Montanist stronghold: Epiph. *Panarion* 51.33.

[77] Note *ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* vi.19.18: bishop Celsus and lay-preacher Paulinus at Iconium, bishop Atticus and lay-preacher Theodore at Synnada (early third century); and Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* vi.28.1: bishop Nicomas of Iconium (260s).

[78] Compare the small town of Orcistus (late 320s): *MAMA* vii.305, col. i, ll. 39–45: Constantine claiming (no doubt tendentiously) *omnes [i]bidem sectatores sanctissimae religionis habitare dicantur*.

Hermus valley, from Temenothyrae (on the western Phrygian border with Lydia) and its larger eastern neighbour Acmonia, the upper Tembris valley, the valley of the Çarşamba river, the territories around Eumeneia (South Phrygia) and Laodicea Catacecaumene (East Phrygia). Interpreting these sepulchral monuments is fraught with difficulties – identifying, first, indubitably Christian stones (given the high degree of cross-fertilization in sepulchral sentiment with polytheistic as well as Jewish monuments), and then, second, dating undated epitaphs by means of typological analogy, lettering and workshop production with the relatively very few epitaphs dated securely to the pre-Constantinian period. But even so, the implications are clear that some Christians here in these relatively remote and isolated regions were sufficiently comfortable in their environment to display publicly their Christian allegiance; that, on some reckoning, and relying on the proportion of Christian as opposed to non-Christian monuments surviving for the period, Christians made up a significant minority of the population (say, some 20 to 30 percent, and in some instances this went much higher, most notably in the upper Tembris valley and in Eumeneia and its surrounding district). But it is also clear that the record is patchy – Christianity spread irregularly even within a single provincial area.[79] Unfortunately, therefore, we cannot safely extrapolate from this evidence to other areas, but at least we do have unimpeachable evidence that there was an appreciable Christian population in these rural districts. And even though these provinces sent some twenty-four episcopal representatives altogether to Nicaea the location of the bishoprics also indicates that Christianization was far from evenly distributed – eastern Pisidia/Lycaonia is noticeably under-represented, for example.

(i) Summary

On the (unsatisfactory) evidence we have assembled it was clearly a very different experience to live as a Christian in one of the large urban communities (such as Rome, Carthage, Alexandria, Antioch), open to the channels of communication with a wealth of visitors and with a substantial community of fellow-believers, from living (say) in a relatively remote and isolated village of upper Egypt or rural Anatolia. Little wonder there developed regional differences in liturgy and doctrinal emphases, let alone in organizational principles. Some areas, like the African provinces, appear to have a bishop appointed for every community of whatever size whereas others, as in the Egyptian terrain, appear to have fewer bishops with (village) communities left in charge of presbyters – and *chorepiscopi* ('country bishops') appear in the eastern provinces, enjoying an uneasy relationship with their

[79] See now the admirable analysis by Mitchell, *Anatolia* II.38ff., 57ff.; also *MAMA* X.xxxvi–xl and Tabbernee (1997).

urban colleagues.[80] The number of bishops, therefore, from any one area is a statistic that requires further explication. And everywhere it is difficult to discern the degree of rural penetration – and where we can (dimly) discern this, even within a particular region the spread seems erratic and far from uniform. Everywhere also, our sources do not allow us to have much sense of the size and spread of non-orthodox Christian groups – Gnostics, Montanists, Marcionites, Novatianists, Manichaeans *et al.* – but undoubtedly they did exist, as the sequel shows.

Neither can we see clearly the processes of evangelization.[81] So far as we have evidence, to be accepted into baptism involved an unspectacular and ordered procedure, requiring (by contrast with contemporary polytheistic religion) not just joining a cult-group honouring a deity of acknowledged power, but a somewhat lengthy period of instruction in doctrinal content as a catechumen as well as of moral testing in conformity with behavioural codes. Under these circumstances it would be unrealistic to anticipate too wild an advance in numbers over the century, but one practical effect of the 'toleration' of Gallienus may well have been to relax the resistance of many to undergo this process after the turbulent decade of the 250s. Even so we cannot see too many in the narrow percentage of the population belonging to the élite classes – though we cannot expect them, under the circumstances in the third century, to be forward in displaying any Christian allegiance either.[82] But as the fourth-century sequel reveals, Christians emerge rapidly in official ranks, suggesting our record for the later third century is very defective.[83] It was not totally unpredictable, therefore, but neither were the probabilities very high, that Constantine should have emerged from a family environment displaying some tolerance towards Christianity. The brothers Gregory and Athenodore, hailing as they did from the administrative and governing classes, but attracted to the new philosophy, may not have been so isolated a phenomenon as they appear to us earlier in the century. Certainly Christianity was emerging as a worthy target for serious philosophic polemic by the end of the second century (Celsus) and this continued into the late third century (e.g. the voluminous Porphyry). It is now a major feature on the religious landscape, and as the following section discloses, felt by some to be a thoroughly threatening one.

[80] Revealed in the Council of Ancyra (314) *can.* 13; the Council of Neocaesarea (315?) *can.* 13; and, later in the century, the Council of Antioch *can.* 8, 10; the Council of Sardica *can.* 6; the Council of Laodicea *can.* 57.

[81] We do catch glimpses in such passages as Origen, *c. Cels.* III.9, III.44; III.53; III.55ff. And Dionys. Alex. (*ap.* Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.11.12), defensively, sees the hand of God in his being exiled to Cephro so that 'for the first time was the word sown through our agency among those who had not formerly received it'.

[82] For analysis of the known data for the third century, see G. W. Clarke (1974) 32ff. and especially Eck (1971).

[83] See Barnes (1989). For sociological modelling of growth in the sect of Christians see Stark (1996) and Hopkins (1998).

And whilst statistics fail us, Christianity certainly emerges as a visible presence in the social landscape of the empire as well – but the fourth century shows that whereas, on our evidence, it can have been overall only a minor presence (and especially so in some of the western provinces), it was soon to be a powerful and dynamic one.

II. CHRISTIANS AND THE ROMAN STATE

1. Persecution, A.D. 193–249

In this first section I provide a quick summary – with minimal analysis – of the known clashes between Roman authorities and the Christian communities in the first half of the third century.

'Persecution' of Christians by Roman officials had been in the course of the second century sporadic and unsystematic, and basically local in range, and is best seen in the context of the occasional harassment of many another exotic group equally regarded as deviant (astrologers, soothsayers, magicians and the like). However, Christians had been considered troublesome enough to have been brought to the attention, from time to time, not just of Roman provincial governors or of the Roman urban prefect but on rare occasions of Roman emperors themselves (Trajan, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius), so much so that early in the third century Ulpian was able to draw up a register of imperial rescripts (i.e. imperial responses to referrals by provincial governors, possibly responses to complaints or queries by provincial councils etc.) demonstrating the punishments that by then were deemed appropriate for Christian adherents:[84] there was by that date an adequate accumulation of case-histories with imperial authority. But the intermittent and regional nature of the outbreaks needs to be emphasized: Christians were *ipso facto* potentially on the wrong side of the law but it required local circumstances to realize that potentiality, especially through popular agitation (whether out of religious fervour, or of superstitious fear occasioned by earthquake, drought, flood, plague or famine) or, occasionally, through Christian enthusiastic provocation. In either case it was pressure from below, rather than imperial initiative, that gave rise to troubles, breaching the generally prevailing, but nevertheless fragile, limits of Roman tolerance: the official attitude was passive until activated to confront particular cases and this activation normally was confined to the local and provincial level. There is a strong tendency in later sources to universalize these local outbreaks as the heroization of the past age of martyrdom gained pace in the post-Constantinian era but there are no solid grounds

[84] Lact. *Div. Inst.* V.II.19: *rescripta principum nefaria collegit ut doceret quibus poenis adfici oporteret* (from the seventh book of *De Officio Proconsulis*, composed under early Caracalla).

for concluding that the same pattern did not apply for the first half of the third century as it had throughout the second century.

And throughout this first half of the third century we have to appreciate that this intermittent trouble is brought to our attention by casual evidence: our sources being so fitful, we have to allow that we have but a sample of what Christians may well have experienced elsewhere (thanks to Eusebius, a fundamental source, our view is notoriously biased towards eastern evidence). And we have to allow that, additionally, victims belonging to other Christian sects may well have been crowded out of that imperfect record: with martyrdom valued as the supreme sign of the elect, memory of these sectaries was promptly erased in what emerged as the orthodox tradition, in the rush to lay claim to the spiritual high ground of martyrdom. It was of course solemnly and consistently argued by the orthodox that there can be no true martyrdom outside the church. Thus, under the Antonines, Montanists and Marcionites and other non-orthodox groups could lay claim to 'innumerable martyrs' (*ap.* Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* v.16.20f.), but typically our knowledge of individuals comes basically in efforts to discredit their spiritual credentials; e.g. *ap.* Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* v.18.5ff. (Montanists); Tert. *adv. Prax.* 1.4 (Praxeas). A century later, in the martyrdom of Pionios (250) we casually – but significantly – encounter (without elaboration) a Marcionite martyr (ch. 21.5f.) and a Montanist confessor (ch. 11.2) – such sectaries, generally suppressed, have to be added mentally to our register of Christian victims.[85] In all this the frequent occurrence of confessors (that is, released Christians) as opposed to perfected martyrs is noteworthy: in the case of provincial governors, wielding as they did the *ius gladii*, their discretionary powers (the *arbitrium iudicantis*) could be crucial. A period of imprisonment after an initial hearing (with pressure to recant) appears to have been standard, to be followed, in a significant number of cases, by eventual release as hopelessly recalcitrant – or as renegade (Tert. *ad Scap.* 4 provides, among many other instances, some pertinent illustrations). Arrest as a Christian did not inevitably lead to a martyr's death: adventitious circumstances such as the hostility of a crowd or the strength of the religious sentiments of a governor could be determinant.

Under Septimius Severus the spotlight for us falls on Egypt and Africa, but that focus may well be due to the vagaries of our surviving documentation (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.1–5; Tertullian's writings especially *De Corona Militis, Scorpiace* and *ad Scap.,* and the *Passio* of Perpetua and Felicitas).[86]

[85] Note also the anonymous Marcionite woman, martyred in Caesarea (Pal.) under Valerian, Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.12, and the Marcionite bishop Asclepius martyred also in Caesarea (Pal.) during the Great Persecution, Eus. *Mart. Pal.* 10.3 (A.D. 309), as well as the condemned Thecla (who has Montanist companions in prison) *Mart. Pal.*(L) 3.2 (A.D. 304); cf. 6.3.

[86] Symptomatic of our incidental knowledge are passing remarks made by Tertullian (*Ad Scap*. 3.4) in a passage warning Scapula (A.D. 212) of the grim fate that awaits persecuting governors: Claudius Lucius

Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* VI.1 (in typical fashion) asserts that 'when Severus was stirring up persecution against the churches, in every place splendid martyrdoms of the athletes of piety were accomplished and this was especially frequent at Alexandria', and he goes on to illustrate – without further reference to the emperor or to other places – the cases of ten specific (Alexandrian) individuals whilst declaring 'countless numbers' donned the crowns of martyrdom (*Hist. Eccl.* VI.2.3). There is no good reason to doubt the reality of the particular cases that Eusebius cites, only the generalization that he draws from them and the imperial source he attributes to them. The named victims are Plutarch (brother of Heraclas, later to be bishop of Alexandria), Serenus, Heraclides, Hero, a second Serenus, Herais ('of the women'), Potamiaena (these seven are all identified by Eusebius as being converts and disciples of Origen's, several being catechumens or only recently baptized, *Hist. Eccl.* VI.3.2; 3.13, 4.1ff.), Marcella (the mother of Potamiaena) and the soldier Basilides (also a catechumen?, *Hist. Eccl.* VI.5.6). These all appear to suffer under the Egyptian prefect Ti. Claudius Subatianus Aquila (*Hist. Eccl.* VI.3.3, 5.2 – attested in office from at least 206 until 211). The tenth named victim is Leonides, Origen's father: his death, and the subsequent confiscation of his property (*Hist. Eccl.* VI.2.13), is dated by Eusebius unequivocally to the tenth year of Severus (*Hist. Eccl.* VI.2.2) under the prefecture of Quintus Maecius Laetus (attested for at least 200 to 203). Despite the impression of Eusebius, his case might well be an incident quite separate from that of the other victims: at least a further prefecture of Egypt, that of Claudius Julianus, intervened (204–205/6).[87] There does seem to be a popular element in the attack on the catechetical school and its members: Origen barely escaped stoning from the heathen mob, he needed to be defended in his own home by soldiers and was forced to flee from house to house for safety from the unbelievers (or so Eusebius defensively declares, *Hist. Eccl.* VI.2.4ff.). But this is no mob pogrom: some of the victims are beheaded.

At about the same time (traditionally remembered as 7 March), when the procurator Hilarianus was acting proconsul in Africa Proconsularis (203?, but 202 or 204 are also possible), a group of five youthful catechumens along with their teacher were condemned to death fighting the beasts in the amphitheatre of Carthage (though the location is not actually attested in the *Passio*), at games celebrating the birthday of Geta, the emperor's younger son. They were two slaves, Revocatus and Felicitas, Saturninus and

Herminianus (*PIR*² C888), angered at his wife's conversion to Christianity, as governor of Cappadocia had cruelly treated Christians and had succeeded in making some deny their faith through torture. Likewise Tertullian implies by the remark attributed to Caecilius Capella (partisan of Pescennius Niger) at the eventual fall of Byzantium in A.D. 196 ('Christians rejoice') that Christians had been ill treated under his governorship there.

[87] Bastianini (1975) 304ff. and (1980) 85.

Secundulus (who actually died in prison before the ordeal, *Passio* ch. 14) along with the twenty-two year old Perpetua, highlighted in our account as being 'of good family, well-educated and a married Roman matron' (*honeste nata, liberaliter instituta, matronaliter nupta*, ch. 2.1). Their teacher, Saturus, not arrested with his catechumens, voluntarily surrendered himself subsequently (ch. 4.5). The dream account of Saturus adds four named others, seen to be already in the garden of Paradise, 'Jucundus, Saturninus, and Artaxius, who were burnt alive in this same persecution, together with Quintus who had actually died as a martyr in prison' (ch. 11.9) whilst they also recognized in Paradise 'many of their brethren, including martyrs' (ch. 13.8).[88] The extraordinary document of their trial preserves the record written by Perpetua herself of her imprisonment including four of her dreams (chs. 3–10) along with Saturus' account of his vision (chs. 11–13). By these accounts we gain a remarkable insight into the contemporary mentality of such martyrs, their sense of privileged spiritual access (a prophetic dream, on request, to determine whether they would indeed suffer – or be reprieved, ch. 4), their sense of spiritual powers (Perpetua's deceased brother Dinocrates released from his sufferings, chs. 7–8), their sense of spiritual superiority (they act as mediators of the contention between their bishop Optatus and the presbyter Aspasius, ch. 13), their sense of immediate election to Paradise (chs. 10off.). Apart from graphically perceiving the stark realities of their periods of imprisonment (awaiting formal trial before the acting proconsul and then, after condemnation, awaiting the games) we also perceive in Perpetua's case familial tensions ('I grieved for my father's sake because he alone of all my kindred [*genus*] would not be rejoicing at my suffering' ch. 5.6) with a brother also a catechumen (her younger brother having died, it seems, unbaptized, chs. 7f.) and presumably mother and (absent) husband already Christian. Other-worldly aspirations are highlighted by her preparedness to abandon her infant son at the breast (as well as by Felicitas' abandonment of her new-born child). The crowd (*populus*) is variously shown to be sympathetic and hostile (eg. chs. 17, 18.9, 20.2, 21.7). The grounds for condemnation are importantly (and unequivocally) reported by Perpetua: 'The procurator Hilarianus . . . said: "Have pity on your father's white hairs, have pity on your infant son. Perform sacrifice (*fac sacrum*) for the well-being of the emperors." And I replied: "I will not." Hilarianus said: "Are you a Christian?" And I replied: "I am a Christian . . ." . Then Hilarianus pronounced sentence on us all and condemned us to the beasts' (ch. 6.3ff.). The sequence of official thinking is clear: so long as Perpetua was prepared to conform to accepted public

[88] Tertullian's *Scorpiace* could well be composed at this season when 'some Christians the fire has tested, others the sword, others the beasts, whilst yet others are still hungering in prison, having had in the meantime, through clubs and claws, a foretaste of their martyrdom (ch. 1.11)': see Barnes (1969). On the *Passio*, see the study of B. D. Shaw (1993).

Roman ritual ceremonies, she could go free (whatever the beliefs – and indeed practices – she might privately continue to maintain). The exclusivity of Christian worship was the sticking-point. That avenue refused, condemnation followed precisely on the grounds of her persistent Christian adherence. Had she refused to sacrifice, for example, and then it emerged that she was Jewish, condemnation would not have followed.

Many have attempted to link these (on the face of it, quite unrelated) incidents in Egypt and Africa with a compressed and confused passage in *SHA*, *Sev.* 16.8f. which has Septimius, with Caracalla, journeying from Syria through Palestine on their way to Alexandria (that is, in A.D. 199) and 'on their way he established many privileges (*iura*) for the Palestinians. He forbade under severe penalty that people should become Jews (*Iudaeos fieri*). He also decreed the same concerning Christians (*idem etiam de Christianis sanxit*).' However, if such a linkage is made, there are clear chronological difficulties; the purported imperial embargo does not find any resonance elsewhere in our sources – indeed Tertullian, *ad Scap.* 4 (A.D. 212) can wax eulogistic on Septimius' favourable personal relations with Christians;[89] and not all of the known victims fall into the envisaged category (of converts? – and their teachers); e.g. Leonides. The *Historia Augusta* passage is best regarded as spurious, an invention reflecting the author's late fourth-century preoccupations and prejudices, and the temptation to link these incidents should accordingly be resisted.[90] They can be considered as typical of the perils that could potentially befall anywhere openly enthusiastic converts and staunch Christian adherents alike. Such a charged atmosphere in which Christians found themselves living was guaranteed to generate eager talk of the coming of Antichrist and perfervid millenarian expectations (so at this season Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.7 (the writer Judas); Hippol. *In Dan.* 4.18 (Syria), 4.19 (Pontus); Tert. *Adv. Marc.* III.24 (Palestine)).

However, *De Corona* 1.1 (a Montanist work, dated to the time of a military donative by joint Severan emperors, i.e. datable to before late 211)[91] has a (Carthaginian ?) soldier brought to trial (*reus ad praefectos*, 1.2) and imprisoned, there awaiting the largesse of martyrdom (*donativum Christi in carcere expectat*, 1.3) but by his ostentatious refusal to wear the ceremonial laurel crown drawing the complaint of pusillanimous Christians for 'jeopardizing for them a peace so long and so good' (*tam bonam et longam pacem periclitari sibi*, 1.5). We must suppose that there have not been too many incidents known to Tertullian and his audience like that of Perpetua, Felicitas and companions in the interim, since *c.* 203.

[89] 'Furthermore Severus, far from inflicting harm on men and women of senatorial status (*et clarissimas feminas et clarissimos viros*), knowing them to be of this persuasion, actually bore distinguished testimony in their favour and publicly restored them to us from out of the hands of a raging mob (*populo furenti*)' (*Ad Scap.* 4.6).

[90] See Schwarte (1963). [91] See Freudenberger (1970).

Under early Caracalla it was to be no different. Tertullian bears incidental testimony to lethal danger in Numidia and Mauretania (*nam et nunc a praeside Legionis, et a praeside Mauretaniae vexatur hoc nomen, sed gladio tenus, ad Scap.* 4.8), as well as continuing stress in Africa Proconsularis itself (*ad Scap.*, *passim*): one martyr is named, Mavilus of Hadrumetum, condemned to the beasts, *ad Scap.* 3.5 (there are textual uncertainties). We also encounter some later surviving confessors, implying that their stand for their faith had occurred under the earlier Severans. For example, bishop Alexander was in prison as a confessor in Cappadocia at the time of the appointment of Asclepiades as bishop of Antioch (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.11.5), in the first year of Caracalla, 211/12 (according to Eusebius' *Chronicle*): he was, however, soon to be released and translated from his see in Cappadocia to the bishopric in Jerusalem (*Hist. Eccl.* VI.8.7). Asclepiades, in turn, had been a confessor by the time of his appointment to Antioch, *Hist. Eccl.* VI.11.4 – his confession (and release) presumably had taken place during the principate of Septimius; and Asclepiades' predecessor in the *cathedra* of Antioch, Serapion, had had occasion to write to one Domnus who had 'fallen away from the faith of Christ at the time of the persecution', *Hist. Eccl.* VI.12.1, that is, again under Septimius, Serapion's bishopric extending from 191 to 210 according to Eusebius' *Chronicle*. We ought to deduce further trouble for Christians apart from Africa and Egypt, in Cappadocia and Syria. Likewise again for Africa: Cyprian (*Ep.* 39.3.1) in early 251 incidentally mentions the illustrious martyred forebears of the young (Decian) confessor Celerinus – his grandmother Celerina and his two uncles (paternal and maternal), Laurentinus and Egnatius, both soldiers. We must presume their deaths (in Carthage? – their anniversaries were annually commemorated there) occurred in the reasonably distant past – Cyprian in the *De Lapsis* (251) can blame the *pax longa* for its lulling effects in stultifying the faith of those who had recently lapsed (*De Laps.* 9) – but they will still have had to fall within the last generation or two. We have to suppose such scattered incidents were endemic, liable to occur anywhere at any time: however diminished these incidents may have become in frequency, there still remained a background of insecurity and some peril in which Christians had to live out their lives.

However, from our perception of things, that pattern of peril does indeed appear to be visibly changing. There is much less evidence of outbreaks of popular hostility against Christians in the thirty-five years or so before 250: was this as Christianity became a more familiar part of the kaleidoscopic religious landscape and, being less secretive, therefore became less feared? And in parallel many fewer Christians are known to be arraigned for trial. But appearances can be deceptive and our perception distorted by the tyranny of our sources: we have, for example, scant western evidence between Tertullian and Cyprian and where we do have it (e.g. *via* the papal

calendars) much is unreliable.[92] The earliest and the most reliable (the Liberian) does record baldly the deportation of the pope, Pontian, and the presbyter Hippolytus (one supposes *the* Hippolytus) to the unhealthy island of Sardinia in 235 (and the resignation of the former from his office in late September on that island).[93] We simply do not know what circumstances may have occasioned this action. But here, once again, the testimony of Eusebius has been invoked (though he was himself apparently unaware of these particular events). For *Hist. Eccl.* VI.28 reads:

> When Alexander the emperor of the Romans had brought his principate to an end after thirteen years, he was succeeded by Maximin Caesar. He, through ill-will towards the house of Alexander, since it consisted for the most part of believers, raised a persecution, ordering the leaders of the church alone to be put to death, as being responsible for the teaching of the gospel. Then also Origen composed his work *On Martyrdom*, dedicating the treatise to Ambrose and Protoctetus, a presbyter of the community at Caesarea; for in the persecution no ordinary distress had befallen them both, in which distress it is recorded that these men were distinguished for the confession they made during the period, not more than three years, that the reign of Maximin lasted. Origen has noted this particular time for the persecution, in the twenty-second of his *Expositions of the Gospel according to John*, and in various letters.
>
> (tr. J. E. L. Oulton)

Regrettably we do not have Eusebius' collection of Origen's letters (*Hist. Eccl.* VI.36.3) nor the twenty-second *Exposition on the Gospel of John* (from which Eusebius deduced the dates of the trouble) but we can verify that in the *Exhortation to Martyrdom* Origen does address Ambrose (deacon and Origen's patron) and the otherwise unattested priest Protoctetus urging them to face with steadfast courage threatening troubles, but in the most general of hortatory terms. There are in fact no deaths (Ambrose surviving to be the dedicatee of the *contra Celsum* composed a dozen years later, *c.* 248). The rest seem to be deductions and generalizations of Eusebius' own (imperial motivation,[94] universal attack on church leaders specifically, as being responsible for preaching the gospel) based presumably on his own more recent experiences. Ironically, where we do have some collateral evidence it serves only to undermine further Eusebius' generalization.

[92] For example, the legendary stories of the deaths in Rome in 222 of pope Callistus (thrown down a well with a stone tied to his neck), the aged Roman presbyter Calepodius (his body thrown into the Tiber) and the Roman presbyter Asterius (hurled from a bridge into the Tiber) are evidence, if genuine, of (on the face of it) mob pogroms – but attestation for them is late and untrustworthy (*Acta SS Octob.* vol. VI.439ff. (*acta*); 410ff. (discussion); Duchesne (1955–7) I.xcii f.).

[93] *Chron. Min.* I.74ff. The later *Liber Pontificalis* has, unreliably, Pontian die, beaten to death by clubs, in late October the same year: Duchesne (1955–7) I.145f. (and discussion, I.xciv f.).

[94] Compare the similar motivation ascribed later to Decius (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.39) after the alleged Christian sympathies of his predecessor Philip (VI.34), and also *Orac. Sibyl.* XIII.87f. ('And immediately there will be spoliation and murder of the faithful because of the former king.') with the commentary (and text) of Potter, *Prophecy*, *ad loc.*

For Firmilian, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, writes to Cyprian in the autumn of 256 (Cypr. *Ep.* 75.10.1f.):

(10.1) I should like now to recount to you an incident, relevant to this present matter, which happened in our area. About twenty-two years ago, in the period after the emperor Severus Alexander, a great number of trials and tribulations befell in these parts both the whole community generally and the Christians in particular. There occurred a long succession of earthquakes, as a result of which many buildings throughout Cappadocia and Pontus collapsed, and even towns were swallowed up by crevasses opening out in the ground, sinking into the abyss. In consequence, there arose against us a violent persecution for the Name; it broke out suddenly after there had been a lengthy period of peace, and its effect was all the more devastating in throwing our people into disarray because trouble of this kind was so unexpected and novel to them. Serenianus was governor of our province at the time, a bitter and relentless persecutor.

(10.2) The faithful, finding themselves in the midst of this upheaval, took to flight in all directions in fear of persecution; they abandoned their home territories and moved to other parts of the country (they were free so to move, in that this persecution was local and did not extend to the whole world). Suddenly, a certain woman started up in our midst: she presented herself as a prophetess, being in a state of ecstasy and acting as if she were filled with the Holy Spirit. But she was so deeply under the sway and control of the principal demons that she managed to disturb and deceive the brethren for a long time by performing astonishing and preternatural feats, and she even promised that she would cause the earth to quake: not that her devil had such power that he was able to cause an earthquake or disturb the elements by his own efforts, but that, as an evil spirit, possessing the gift of foreknowledge and therefore perceiving that there was to be an earthquake, he sometimes pretended that he was going to do that which he saw was going to happen.[95]

Firmilian is insistent that the persecution of 235 which he is describing was local to Cappadocia and Pontus (unlike the recent one under Decius) and he is clear about its origins (not the emperor, but the reaction of the pagan population – including the governor Licinnius Serenianus [*PIR*² L245] – to a series of local earthquakes)[96] and about its victims (Christian congregations, not exclusively church leaders). The general air of superstitious hysteria engendered by the natural disasters is significant – as equally is the long period free from persecution that the region had enjoyed (to our knowledge,

[95] For commentary see G. W. Clarke (1989) 263ff.

[96] Origen in his commentary on Matt. 24:7 (*GCS* 38 = Origen 11, Klostermann (1976) 75) has this personal observation to make on the signs for the coming end of the world: 'We have personal knowledge (*scimus autem et apud nos*) of an earthquake and destruction that occurred in certain areas. As a result, heathens without the faith claimed Christians were to blame for the earthquake – hence churches suffered persecution and were burnt – and even men who were considered wise similarly claimed publicly that severe earthquakes occur because of the Christians.' It is perfectly feasible that Origen, the guest of Firmilian in Cappadocia, is referring to these same events (hence we have the added detail of the burning of churches).

extending since the governorship of Claudius Lucius Herminianus and the confession of bishop Alexander). So far as we know this may well have been typical of the histories of the church communities in many regions of the empire.

All told, it is prudent to deduce scattered troubles in Palestine, Cappadocia and Rome at this period of 235–8 (and quite probably elsewhere) but no universal proscription of church leaders as Eusebius posits.[97] And we remain ignorant of any further troubles until over a decade later. Indeed Origen writing towards the end of the 240s confirms the general impression of the peace of this period for Christians (*c. Cels.* 3.15):

> That not even the fear of outsiders maintains our unity is clear from the fact that by the will of God this has ceased for a long time now. It is, however, probable that the freedom of believers from anxiety for their lives will come to an end when again those who attack Christianity in every possible way regard the multitude of believers as responsible for the rebellion which is so strong at this moment,[98] thinking that it is because they are not being persecuted by the governors as they used to be.
>
> (tr. H. Chadwick)

Likewise, writing with hindsight after the devastation of the persecution of Decius, Dionysius of Alexandria can also refer to the preceding principate of Philip as having been 'more kindly' (εὐμενεστέρα) towards Christians (*ap.* Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.41.9). Overall the record of persecution, as it survives for us, would indicate an increasing acceptance of the Christian presence in the empire as the first half of the third century progressed and a corresponding easing in the physical molestation of the Christian communities.[99]

But the chance survival of part of a letter of Dionysius of Alexandria (addressed to Fabius of Antioch *c.* 251/2), preserved by Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* VI.41, acts as some brake in forming too confident, and too sanguine, a picture. Without it we would not know of marauding mobs of chanting native Egyptian fanatics (that is, in the view of the sophisticated Christian Hellene, Dionysius), rampaging through the streets and alleys of Alexandria, looting the houses of Christians, forced to flee, and lynching four victims (Metras and Quinta, stoned to death; Apollonia burnt; Serapion hurled to his death from an upper storey). This fierce and unruly pogrom (it is no official persecution) lasted, we are told, a long time (ἐπὶ πολύ: *ap. Hist. Eccl.* VI.41.8), starting a full year before the actual arrival of Decius' orders (that is, in late 248 / early 249). It is salutary to be reminded that we know

[97] Further discussion in G. W. Clarke (1966); Lippold (1975).

[98] The stasis referred to may well be that of T. Claudius Marinus Pacatianus, but there are other candidates.

[99] Lactantius also echoes the sentiment that the persecution of Decius erupted unexpectedly after long peace: *sed et postea longa pax rupta est* (*DMP* 3.5).

of this popular agitation only because Dionysius wishes to emphasize the spiritual standing of his Alexandrian church – before, eventually, lecturing the patriarch of Antioch on the need to forgive sins of apostasy, as the Alexandrian church is doing (*ap. Hist. Eccl.* VI.42.5ff., VI.44.1ff.). It is too easy to conclude (as many have) that by mid-century Christians have virtually ceased to be targets of popular outcry. The momentous events of the coming year are to witness repeat scenes in Rome, Alexandria, Carthage, Smyrna (and no doubt elsewhere).

III. PERSECUTION OF DECIUS

1. Summary

I first provide a very summary account of the course of the persecution, followed by some detailed sections justifying the construction of that summary. Sources are abundant, comprising principally the correspondence of Cyprian (especially *Epp*. 5–41) and his treatise *De Lapsis*, the letters of Dionysius of Alexandria (largely preserved as extracts in Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI and VII), the *Acta* of Pionios and the forty-five extant Decian *libelli* from Egypt.

By autumn 249 the emperor Decius was secured in power after his usurpation. It cannot have been very long afterwards that orders went out from Rome to all the provincial governors of the empire that there was to be a universal sacrifice to the gods of empire – possibly to be proclaimed on 3 January 250 at the public civic ceremony of the *vota solemnia*, the annually celebrated sacrifices for the emperor's personal welfare (though attractive, this is an entirely speculative setting). At any rate victims are attested before the month of January 250 was over.[100] On the face of it, this was a decidedly old-fashioned gesture – on the model of a *supplicatio* when in the distant past the people of Rome were bidden in times of public distress to come forward as a body to throng all the temples and shrines of the tutelary deities of the state – but the scale of the operation was entirely unprecedented: a religious rally by the inhabitants of the entire empire to win the favour of the gods who protected that empire – and in support of the new dynasty under whose sacred auspices the destiny of the empire now lay. This was to be the dynasty inaugurating Rome's second millennium (the millennial games and pageants having been celebrated with much pomp and fanfare the previous year, 248). So far as our evidence

[100] The earliest known victim is the bishop of Rome, Fabian, who was dead by 20 January 250. (*Lib. Pont*. 21 – 19 January; *Mart. Hiero*. XIII Kal. Feb. (20 January), *PL* XXX.440). Babylas, bishop of Antioch, died in prison (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.39.4): his anniversary was usually celebrated on 24 January (*Acta SS* Nov. vol. II.2 (1931) 59f.) – but his death could have been in 251 rather than 250. Certainly Dionys. Alex. *ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.41.9 describes the edict as arriving in Alexandria promptly after news of the change of imperial rulers.

goes the gods to be so honoured were left unspecified, allowing for variants in local civic divinities – whether it be, say, the Nemeseion in Smyrna, the Serapaeum in Alexandria or the Capitoline triad of Jupiter, Juno and Minerva in the more Romanized *civitates* or indeed some more personal cult (Pionios' dialogue with the proconsul of Asia who vainly urges the Christian to offer sacrifice to whatsoever deity he cares to have in mind – to the air, if he likes – is a revealing vignette of this persecution, *Acta Pionii* 19f.). But a publicly accepted gesture of religious obeisance had to be done by pouring libation and tasting sacrificial offerings.[101] The emperor-cult was not directly involved, only insofar as it could (as in the past) be used as a means of testing Christian obstinacy – or proving apostasy.[102] Honour to the gods was the object, not necessarily entailing abjuration of private or local beliefs or cult practices (which were of course legion throughout the length and breadth of the empire, Christianity included). About Decius' edict there is, however, a foretaste of that autocracy which marks fourth-century government: directives are being issued from above affecting the lives of the entire empire as the central authorities attempt to grapple with the problems of commanding and controlling an unwieldy and extremely diverse empire. There is here a presage of those centralist pressures for conformity and homogeneity. Christians, certainly, would have seen it as a dramatic, indeed drastic, departure from their own experience of the more *laissez-faire* attitude towards their religion that had characterized the previous years, the preceding regimes now appearing benign by contrast.[103] For there has been a significant shift: it is now the religious sentiment of the imperial court – rather than that of the local populace – that is to determine the well-being or otherwise of Christians. It is a watershed moment. And the sources are repetitious in declaring the suddenness and unexpectedness of the outbreak of persecution for Christians.

But it is clear that an attack on Christianity as such was not the object of the legislation. However, bishops by this date could be figures of prominence, especially in the major metropolitan cities, known to command sizeable congregations. They are promptly put under pressure to lead their followers to the pagan altars.[104] Christians, therefore, quickly become victims

[101] In *Ep.* 55.2.1 Cyprian uniquely describes in mitigation the renegade bishop Trofimus and his flock as *thurificati* (i.e. offerers of incense) in contradistinction to the more heinous *sacrificati* (i.e. offerers of sacrifice).

[102] Thus *Acta Pionii* 8.4 (Polemon, the temple verger, urges Pionios: 'Make sacrifice at least to the emperor'), *Acta Pionii* 18.14 (the apostate bishop Euctemon swears by the emperor's *tyche* that he is not a Christian).

[103] The likely source of the popularly held belief (which does not guarantee historical veracity) on Philip's Christianity, reflected in Dionys. Alex. *ap.* Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.10.3; Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.34; *Orac. Sibyl.* XIII.88 (where see the commentary of Potter, *Prophecy* 267f.).

[104] Thus in Alexandria a *frumentarius* was despatched to seek out the bishop, Dionysius, the selfsame hour that the imperial proclamation was issued by the prefect, Appius Sabinus: Dionys. Alex. *ap.* Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.40.2.

by their refusal to comply (Jews appear to have been exempted, as by now traditional in Roman religious matters).[105] And the sequel shows as the year 250 progressed that in most cases various pressures to conform were imposed (tortures, confiscations, exile, periods of imprisonment with varying degrees of deprivation) rather than the (relatively rare) imposition of the death penalty. Here, as before, the (variable) mood of the local populace (which it was the course of prudence to assuage), or the patience (or piety) of the governor, could be determining factors. Though incontestably a period of intense anxiety and extreme apprehension for most confessing Christians, the persecution of Decius – the first of the 'General Persecutions' – was in fact less lurid than many modern accounts (and later *Acta*) might lead us to believe.

One of the remarkable features of the orders is certification – the issuing of certificates (*libelli*), signed by official witnesses, bearing testimony to the recipients' having complied with the orders, and no doubt protecting them from further harassment (not unlike the issuing of taxation receipts). Copies of forty-five such certificates have been recovered from Egypt.[106] There are no good grounds for believing that only Christian suspects were required to produce such documents. The bureaucratic implications must have been immense and, in many less urbanized or bureaucratized districts, well-nigh insurmountable. We are forced to conclude that Decius' intentions were far from idle: the depth of traditional piety involved ought not to be underestimated. To issue those certificates and to supervise the sacrificial actions panels of local commissioners were established, varying in composition from place to place.[107] A fixed date (*dies . . . praestitutus*, Cypr. *de Lapsis* 3) was also set locally by which time the local inhabitants were to have presented themselves; thereafter the commissioners would have had to deal with late-comers, defectors or defaulters drawn to their attention. The recalcitrant were left to languish in prison, their cases referred to a higher magistrate awaiting trial. All indications are that after a lapse of twelve

[105] *Acta Pionii* 3.6, 4.2ff., 13f. preserve a memory in which Jews could not have been molested in the same way as were Christians. Would those Christians invited into the Jewish synagogues be hoping for exemption from Decius' orders (*Acta Pionii* 13.1)? (Cf. Domnus in Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.12).

[106] See Knipfing (1923), editing forty-one (nos. 35–6 re-ed. at *P. Mich.* III.157–8); the further four are published in *PSI* VII.778; Schwartz (1947) = *SB* VI.9084; *P. Oxy.* XLI.2990; XVIII.3929. The phraseology of the *libelli* is standardly patterned: the petitioners declare that they had 'always and without interruption sacrificed to the gods' and now in accordance with the edict's decree they had 'made sacrifice and poured a libation and partaken of the sacred victims'.

[107] In the Egyptian villages the panels range, on our extant documents, from two commissioners plus a secretary to a single local magistrate (*prytanis*); in Smyrna the commission appears to have been composed of 'the temple steward Polemon and those appointed with him' (*Acta Pionii* 3.1); in Spain bishop Martialis appeared before a *procurator ducenarius*, Cypr. *Ep.* 67.6.2. In the large city of Carthage the examiners consisted of 'five prominent citizens joined to the city magistrates', Cypr. *Ep.* 43.3.1 (*quinque primores . . . magistratibus . . . copulati*) whereas in the smaller African town of Capsa a single magistrate oversaw the operation, Cypr. *Ep.* 56.1.1.

months from the date set for the sacrificial rites, the various commissions were dissolved, Christians still imprisoned were released, and exiles were recalled: refugees begin to return and those who had lain concealed in hiding feel free to emerge. By March 251 bishops were planning publicly to hold post-persecution council meetings. By that date it was clear all danger had passed. And this was well in advance of Decius' death in June 251.

We can guess that Decius would have been surprised by his posthumous reputation in the Christian tradition – for Lactantius he is an *execrabile animal* (*DMP* 4); matters of state more pressing than the fate of a relatively few Christian recusants had claimed his attention. And as for his religious programme generally, he may even have regarded it as not unsuccessful. After all, so many pagans as well as lapsing Christians throughout the empire had done honour to the empire's gods (though it is difficult for us to penetrate a theology which might regard gods as honoured by a *false* declaration of continuous piety, as lapsing Christians would have had to profess).

2. *The orders*

Who were enjoined to perform the sacrificial rites – all citizens or all inhabitants (servile population included) of the empire? The wording in several passages of Cyprian certainly leaves the impression that all inhabitants, regardless of sex, age and citizen-status, were probably involved. *Ep*. 15.4 reveals that entire households, having lapsed, were seeking readmittance to communion 'up to twenty and thirty and more at a time who claim to be the relations, in-laws, freedmen and domestics of the person holding a certificate of forgiveness' (issued by one of the martyrs). *Liberti et domestici* could well encompass the servile classes. A similar inference could be drawn from *Ep*. 55.13.2: the case of a Christian who sacrificed in person as proxy 'for his entire family, thereby protecting his wife, his children and his entire household (*domum totam*)'.[108] Even babies were not exempted (*de Laps*. 9, 25).[109] This is a religious rally on the grandest of scales, and we have recorded by way of corroboration evidence of the subsequent persecution for Spain, Gaul, Italy, Sicily, Africa, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Pontus and Asia.

[108] The *nutrix* of *De Laps*. 25 is as likely as not a slave. Sabina (*Acta Pionii* 9.3ff.) was indeed a slave – but, being a runaway, efforts were made to conceal her true identity. Dionysius describes the numerous martyrs in Alexandria as comprising 'men and women, both young men and old, both girls and aged women, both soldiers and civilians, both every race and every age', *ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.11.20. For the grounds for excluding slaves from the terms of the edict, see Selinger (1994) 105f.

[109] Curiously, we do not hear of soldiers as confessors or martyrs (save the five voluntary martyrs at Alexandria, *ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.41.16, 22ff.) – neither are soldiers specified in Valerian's Second Rescript at the end of the decade.

The Egyptian *libelli* so far published were issued between mid-June and mid-July 250: that is a good six months since the promulgation of the edict, at least in some other parts of the empire. Do *libelli*, therefore, belong to a second and more intensive stage in Decius' persecution when such certificates were required? Possibly so. But the evidence for Rome indicates that certification was required there by at least March: Numeria, in bribing her way out of actually sacrificing before Easter (7 April 250), had thereby committed a sin entailing her exclusion from communion (Cypr. *Ep*. 21.2.1, 3.2). She must have acquired an incriminating certificate (compare the description in Cypr. *Ep*. 55.14.1f.), an action regarded by many (at least in the west) as tantamount to apostasy. Similarly by May 250 Cyprian can mention grades of apostasy (i.e. *libellatici vs. sacrificati*) in *Ep*. 15.3.1 (glossed in *Ep*. 20.2.2 as 'those who had stained their hands and lips with sacrilegious contagion or had none the less contaminated their conscience with impious certificates'). This he mentions casually, not as a recent new wave of perils for Christians: there is already by May 250 a significant and importunate group of purchasers of *libelli* in Carthage. Certification was part of the routine of this persecution in his experience.

It is possible, given the locality of the known Egyptian *libelli* (Theadelphia, Alexandru Nesus, Philadelphia, Oxyrhynchus, Arsinoe, Narmouthis, Thosbis), that it took some time for Decius' orders to penetrate into these areas up country and for a local date then to be set for their implementation (there are parallel delays in the promulgation of Diocletian's first edict against Christians – 23 February 303 in Nicomedia, 5 June 303 at a town near Carthage). If this is so, there is one corollary: Christians up in this locality could well have had advance warning of the coming trial from their brethren down on the coast and have had every opportunity to make themselves scarce. This reduces considerably the likelihood of finding any apostate Christians among the finds of the Egyptian *libelli*.

3. Implementation of the orders

Our sources allow us to glimpse scenes of the commissions at work. We see the appointed magistrates assailed by crowds anxious to prove (correctly or not) their religious loyalties (*De Laps*. 8, 25); at times among the crowds Christians of prominent station are pushed forward, urged on by pagan inciters to demonstrate their compliance (Dionysius *ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.41.11). Smoking altars are set up around the forum to help cope with the numbers, but characteristically, in the larger and Romanized town centres, long lines of slowly moving processions wind their way up to the altars set before the Capitoline temple (Cypr. *Ep*. 8.2.3; 21.3.2). When the pilgrim reaches an altar, he (or she) places on it a portion of ritual meat in offering,

pours there a little wine in libation, and tastes a morsel of the sacrificial meats provided. (We hear of some apostates so eager to establish their pagan loyalties that they brought their own *hostia* and *victima* with them (*De Laps*. 8)). Our pilgrim now presents a *libellus* (possibly in duplicate)[110] to the commission; it is often, for the illiterate – or the speaker of a native language only – prepared by a local notary. It is read out (*publice legitur*, Cypr. *Ep*. 30.3.1), the petitioner acknowledges it as his or her own (Cyp. *Ep*. 30.31; 55.14.1), and one or more of the commissioners then duly sign it as witnesses in the appropriate place on the document.

Our sources also allow us to see clandestine evasions of the orders. For what very many Christians did was not to perform the actual pagan rites enjoined upon them but to bribe the official or officials concerned, and purchase their *libellus.* They could thereby secure immunity from the edict's penalties, and, they thought, retain their Christian faith unimpaired (see Cypr. *Ep*. 55.14). Writing a good generation or so earlier, Tertullian testifies that bribing one's way out of the clutches of a persecutor was common practice for a Christian, and one which, with his rigorous temperament, he personally disapproved of (*de Fuga* 5.3, 12–14). Clearly others did not.

In the minds of the *libellatici*, or purchasers of *libelli*, in the persecution of Decius, there was simply not much difference between passing money over to a *praeses* or to an intending *delator*, and thus securing freedom from threatened molestation (as Tertullian testifies Christians had done in the past), and passing over money, either in person or through a deputy (Cypr. *Ep*. 30.3.1; 55.14.1 for deputies), to a local official thus securing a *libellus* and thereby freedom from molestation from Decius' edict. But to the legally minded ecclesiastical authorities, at least in the west, what was purchased was significant (for the east our sources are comparatively meagre).[111] For a Christian it was tantamount to a formal declaration of apostasy, and by acknowledging a *libellus* as his own a Christian was, technically, guilty of denying his faith. He joined the ranks of the *lapsi*, the fallen (so, firmly, *de Laps*. 27f.).

[110] Two identical *libelli* have survived for Aurelia Charis (Knipfing (1923) nos. 11, 26): one copy for the municipal archives? One example appears to have archive numbering: see the commentary by J. R. Rea on *P. Oxy*. LVIII.3929 n. 22. Certainly the finds at Theadelphia, nineteen in number and at the same spot, suggest we are dealing with official copies, promptly rendered redundant by the end of the persecution, and discarded before being numbered and glued together for the municipal files. One group written on papyrus of the same shape and quality was written out by the same scribe's hand. One example is endorsed with the title ἀπογρ(αφή), suggesting that an application was required by at least the head of every household on the analogy with the census, the κατοικίαν ἀπογραφή.

[111] Though Dionysius of Alexandria did discern different degrees of failure among the fallen in his lost work (addressed to Those in Egypt) 'On Repentance' (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.46.1). He also wrote to the church in Armenia 'On Repentance' (VI.46.2) which, Jerome asserts, again discerned degrees of sinfulness (*de Viris Illustr*. 69) – does this imply the province of Armenia Minor was also subject to Decius' edict?

What many other Christians did, in order to escape detection by authorities, or delation before a commission, was to take to flight. Bishops fled from distant provinces to be lost in the crowds of Rome (Cypr. *Ep*. 30.8.1); and we hear, for example, of sixty-five refugees from Carthage who were cared for by the two sisters of Celerinus in Rome (Cypr. *Ep*. 21.4.1). In turn, Christian refugees fled to the crowds of Carthage also; they required special funds for their needs (Cypr. *Ep*. 7.2 (*peregrini*)), and they might find shelter in Christian homes, as displaced fugitives and exiles (*extorres et profugi*), in large numbers (Cypr. *Ep*. 55.13.2). Gregory Thaumaturgus took to the safety of the Pontic hills (relying on Gregory Nyssa, *PG* 46.945), and likewise many Egyptians fled to 'the Arabian mountain' for refuge, and subsequent perils (Dionys. Alex. *ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.42.2ff.).

When the persecution died down Cyprian could muster for his African council, held in the first half of 251, a 'copious number of bishops' and these bishops were 'whole in soul and body' (*Ep.* 55.6.1). The charity of hospitable fellow-Christians had ensured that even the main figures in the church, the bishops, had managed to escape in safety and without spiritual compromise. There is little evidence to suggest that any systematic search was made for them. The authorities appear to have relied on delation as the main weapon for subsequent detection; and if inhabitants were poor, insignificant, and unobtrusive, they were most unlikely to be the victims of delation. And very many Christians *were* poor and insignificant, and they escaped. They were the *stantes,* the steadfast; they are the silent, and characteristic, heroes of the persecution of Decius.[112]

4. The victims

When a recusant was detected by or reported to a commission, when a well-known Christian was arrested by searching soldiers or was hounded by his neighbours to sacrifice and publicly refused, when an enthusiastic Christian defiantly flaunted his refusal to comply, or when a person who had initially sacrificed subsequently presented himself voluntarily in order to repudiate his earlier actions, then the task of the local officials was clear. After verifying the facts, and possibly putting some pressure on the recalcitrant to relent (cf. *Acta Pionii* 15ff.), they referred the case to the local governor, to be dealt with as he came on the rounds of his assize *conventus.* For however tempted they might be in such a case to act *ultra vires,* the matter was strictly beyond the legal competence of such minor magistrates; the penalties liable

[112] Cyprian, a person of eminence in hiding, can insist that his (lower-class) clergy should carry on their work in Carthage if they are *mites, humiles, quieti, taciturni*, that is, if they do not excite attention e.g. *Epp*. 5.2.1; 14.2.1. Likewise Dionysius (away in Libya) can report that four of the presbyters continue to work secretly in Alexandria whereas two others 'being more prominent in the world' have gone off wandering in Egypt (*ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.11.24).

(not laid down perhaps with specificity) could be capital. After his initial ordeal, and confession, the Christian could face a period in prison, awaiting trial, followed by appearance before the governor's tribunal and eventual sentence. At the trial the judge might exercise his rightful discretion and dismiss the case,[113] or the accused might be sentenced to some form of exile (along with confiscation of his property). However, as apostates (to honour the gods) were wanted rather than martyrs, torture and further periods in prison under conditions of varying stringency might be imposed. Under such circumstances obstinacy might be repaid in the end by death in prison, or, in relatively rare cases, by a death sentence, or by eventual dismissal as a hopeless case.

(a) Eastern provinces

It is difficult to assess how far we may with any assurance extrapolate from our surviving evidence to undocumented areas. Nevertheless, patterns are discernible even in such erratic evidence as we do have.

Concerning the area about which he might best be informed, and about events that occurred only about a decade perhaps before his own birth, Eusebius can report that the bishops of Antioch in Syria (Babylas) and of Jerusalem in Palestine (the aged Alexander) both died in prison as unrepentant confessors (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.39.2ff.). Origen (domiciled in Palestinian Caesarea) survived his long months of imprisonment; despite the dungeons, tortures, chains and rack, which Eusebius found described in detail in numerous letters of Origen's, he nevertheless outlived the emperor Decius. We are left to wonder whether there can have been in this general area any other resistance heroes the memory of whom had faded so quickly, within half a century, in the local church tradition. The absence of the death penalty is noteworthy.[114]

Further northwards in Smyrna (province of Asia), we encounter the arrest on 23 February 250, of a group of Christians discovered praying together in a house, namely the presbyter Pionios, together with another presbyter (Limnos) and three of the laity (Sabina, Asclepiades and Macedonia);[115] we observe their refusal to sacrifice after appearing before the commission in the city's forum, and their incarceration. In the face of provocation and pressures from officials, soldiers and populace of Smyrna alike, they adamantly await the arrival of the proconsul. Trial and tortures end with Pionios' condemnation to death (by fire) on 12 March 250, along with a

[113] Some instances are Optatus (Cypr. *Ep.* 29.1.1); Aurelius (Cypr. *Ep.* 38.1.2); Saturninus (Cypr. *Ep.* 21.4.2); Celerinus (Cypr. *Ep.* 39.1.1ff.); Dioscorus (Dionys. Alex. *ap.* Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.41.15f.) etc.

[114] Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.39.5. Note that in Origen's case 'the judge eagerly strove with all his might on no account to put him to death'.

[115] Another presbyter Limnos and a Macedonian woman turn up, already in prison, in *Acta Pionii* 11.2: some conflation and confusion is to be suspected.

Marcionite Christian. We are not told of the fate of his other companions, nor of the three others they discover already in prison. Here the local citizenry voice the threat of death – or females to the brothels – at the outset; there prevails an atmosphere charged with religious hostility (though some of the *agoraioi* are made out to be solicitously sympathetic, *Acta Pionii* 5.2ff.). In such a setting the proconsul judges in the end that little quarter should be given, nor was it expected.

Up in the more northerly district of Pontus the stress in the vague and fulsomely rhetorical narrative of Gregory of Nyssa (in his life of Gregory Thaumaturgus) is on the search for Christian fugitives, arrests, imprisonments and tortures (*PG* XLVI.944ff.). One martyr's name only is given, Troadius (a young man of prominent station), and he was seen in a miraculous vision dying 'after many tortures' (*PG* XLVI.949); this does not sound like execution but death as a result of tortures applied to induce apostasy.

The remaining eastern evidence comes from Egypt and derives from a first-hand account – excerpts from three letters by Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria at the time, as preserved by Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* VI.40.1ff.; VII.11.20ff.). In a few brief pages we meet (for Alexandria), five 'volunteer martyrs' (Ammon, Zeus, Ptolemy, Ingenuus – all soldiers – and Theophilus), five Christians sentenced to death by fire (Macar, Hero, Ater, Isidore and Nemesion), four by quicklime (Julian, Cronion, Epimachus and Alexander), four by beheading or the sword (Besas, Ammonarion, Mercuria, Dionysia) – altogether eighteen named Alexandrian victims, a nineteenth (woman) being left unnamed, *Hist. Eccl.* VI.41.18, plus the instance of a hired steward (Ischyrion) beaten to death by his outraged employer, a government official (outside Alexandria).[116] Throughout, statements and illustrations abound of desperate fugitives and refugees, prisoners heroically enduring tortures, and the angry mob violently harassing notorious Christians (the wealthy and the prominent). What has to be recalled here is the religious atmosphere that has been prevailing in Alexandria. That smouldering mood of bigotry and virulent hostility revealed in the savage pogroms of the previous year was resuscitated by the advent of Decius' edict and appears to be reflected in the apparently high number of Alexandrian victims condemned to death for their religious intransigence. How far this mood prevailed in Egypt generally outside the city of Alexandria we do not know, but we do have Dionysius' general word for it that 'very many others throughout the cities and villages were torn to pieces by the heathen' (*ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.42.1). The forty-five *libelli* surviving from the rubbish dumps of the towns and villages of upper Egypt begin to acquire a moving, and human, context.

[116] On these, see Rousselle (1974) 237ff.

(b) Western provinces

Although our evidence from Spain and Gaul implies that the edict of Decius was enforced there (Cypr. *Epp*. 67, 68), we do not chance to have in our meagre records certain knowledge of Decian martyrs from these localities. The same is true for Sicily (Cypr. *Ep*. 30.6.2), whereas an odd note seems to preserve the names of two Decian victims in Campania (Capua) – Augustine and Felicitas.[117]

In Rome, however, pope Fabian certainly died a martyr's death, in late January of 250. But no detailed account survives of his *gloriosus exitus* (Cypr. *Ep*. 9.1.1); it may have been due to torture, or simply the sudden shock of the adversities of Roman prison life. Thereafter, though imprisonment, privations and tortures were undoubtedly the lot of a number of Christians arrested in Rome, we have to wait very many months before there is any word of Christian deaths. There are indeed none by the time Cyprian wrote Letter 28 (August? / September 250), but some had occurred by Letter 37 (§3; winter of 250/1). The Roman presbyter Moyses died subsequently to that letter, after a confinement lasting some eleven months (*Liber Pontif*. ed. Duchesne 21); many of his companions lived on to enjoy release from their prison only a short while later (see Cyp. *Ep*. 49, *Ep*. 54.2.2). Here, in what was unquestionably the largest Christian community in the west, defiant Christians are not automatically punished with death. The pattern matches much of our other evidence. Christians were not being extirpated, only being induced, by variable means and at variable levels of intensity, to conform, and even then some of those apprehended were simply dismissed in despair.

The rich details provided by the pages of Cyprian present much the same picture for Africa: flight, trials, exiles, confiscations, imprisonments, tortures – and a mob lynching (*Ep*. 40.1.1) – are all there to be sure, with all their attendant fears and horrors, but deaths are relatively few and none is certainly by way of legal condemnation. The best commentary is to read Letter 22 which supplies all of the named victims (seventeen all told)[118] apart from the pair Castus and Aemilius who died undergoing tortures and very probably at this period (*de Laps.* 13). But it remains a humbling

[117] Chronicle 395, *Chron. Min.* 1.738: *hac persecutione Cyprianus hortatus est per epistolas suas Augustinum et Felicitatem, qui passi sunt apud civitatem Capuensem, metropolim Campaniae*. And note *Mart. Hiero*. for *xv Kal. Decemb*., which reads: *In Capua civitate, natalis sanctorum Augustini, Eusurii, Felicitatis* (*PL* xxx.482).

[118] See especially §2.2: 'And so, my very dear brother, send our greetings to Numeria and Candida. [We grant them peace] in accordance with the command of Paulus and of the other martyrs whose names I add: Bassus (died in the [?] debtor's prison [*in pignerario*]), Mappalicus (under interrogation), Fortunio (in prison), Paulus (after interrogation), Fortunata, Victorinus, Victor, Herennius, Credula, Hereda, Donatus, Firmus, Venustus, Fructus, Iulia, Martialis, and Ariston – all by God's will starved to death in prison. You will hear that we too will be joining their company within a matter of days. For it is now eight days – up to the time I write to you – since we have been shut up again. And for the five days previous to that we received but a small amount of bread and a ration of water.' (For commentary, see G. W. Clarke (1984): 336ff.)

reminder of our ignorance, and of the haphazard nature of our testimony, that had Cyprian not had occasion to include a copy of Letter 22 with his correspondence, we would have been left largely unaware in any detailed and personalized way of the harsh realities of the sufferings being endured in Carthage.

Overall, to judge from the list of the victims we know, certainly by no means all Christians 'died in prisons dark, by dungeon, fire and sword'. Far from it. But the memory of the nightmare, if not of the details, of this persecution lived vividly on, and understandably so.

And everywhere the churches were left in the aftermath with the devastation of the fallen within their ranks. For Cyprian 'the wild tempest had overwhelmed not only the majority of our laity' but 'it had included in its destructive wake even a portion of the clergy' (*Ep*. 14.1.1). In Smyrna not only had the bishop apostatized (*Acta Pionii* 15.2) along with 'many of the Christian brethren' (*Acta Pionii* 12.2) but Pionios was urged 'to obey and offer sacrifice like everyone else' (*Acta Pionii* 4.1) and the proconsul could declare that 'many others have offered sacrifice and are now alive' (*Acta Pionii* 20.3). Alexandria in turn saw many defections especially among the more socially eminent including those in official employ (*ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.41.11). May we take Smyrna and Alexandria as typical of the cities in at least the eastern empire? Even whole communities had been led by their bishops into apostasy (Cypr. *Ep*. 55.11.1f. (Trofimus, in Italy), Cypr. *Ep*. 59.10.3 (Repostus, in Africa Proconsularis)) and apostate bishops subsequently fought for reinstatement (Cypr. *Epp*. 65, 67) or joined schismatic groups (Cypr. *Ep*. 59.10.2). Decius' religious rally had left behind a long-lasting legacy of disorder and disarray within the Christian ranks, with dissensions over the proper conditions for readmitting the fallen bitterly dividing the churches everywhere, and with bishops challenged for spiritual leadership by surviving (and, by definition, inspirited) confessors.

IV. PERSECUTION UNDER GALLUS

Dionysius writing from Alexandria in the early 260s addressed a festal (presumably Easter) letter to Hermammon and the brethren in Egypt: this was penned during 'the peace of Gallienus' (*ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.22.12) and expanded on the congenial (but rhetorically unexceptional) theme that emperors enjoy peace, health and prosperity (as, currently, does Gallienus) whilst they engage the favours and prayers of Christians but that they are beset with wars, plagues and disasters when they persecute them (*ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.1; VII.10.22ff.; VII.22.12ff.). This reading of the imperial history of the past decade was illustrated not only from the recent histories of Decius, Valerian and the Macriani, but also from the reign of Gallus, Decius' immediate successor (mid-251 to mid-253). Consistent with this perspective Gallus is blessed – tendentiously – with an initial period 'when

his reign was progressing happily and affairs were going according to his wishes' but subsequently he was unwise enough to 'drive away the holy men who were mediating before God for his peace and well-being. Consequently when he banished these men away, he also banished away their supplications on his behalf' (*ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.1).

After carefully clearing Egyptian Christians of any taint of complicity in the (now defeated) cause of the Macriani, Dionysius concluded his whole argument resoundingly:

> And I am moved to make a further review of the length of days in the imperial reigns. For what I observe is that it has taken only a brief time for those who were utterly ungodly, though once such renowned names, to become nameless, whereas he [= Gallienus], being more pious and god-loving, has already left behind the seven year mark and is now actually completing his ninth year, during which let us now celebrate the feast.
>
> (*ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.23.4)

Unfortunately Dionysius leaves entirely vague the identity of the holy men and what precisely Gallus did to them when he is said to have 'hounded them out' and 'banished' them (ἤλασεν, ἐδίωξεν). Whilst such vagueness is not untypical of the panegyric mode in which his festal letters are couched, were they fellow *Egyptian* heroes we could reasonably expect some named identities. However, we can supply two candidates – from overseas (Rome).

Cornelius, the bishop of Rome, was exiled to Centumcellae (Cyprian does not know of his confession until late spring 253) and there he died whilst apparently still in office, at least before 25 June 253 (the commencement date of his successor's pontificate).[119] That successor, Lucius, was also promptly relegated, immediately upon his election to office, sharing his relegation with companions (Cypr. *Ep*. 61.1.1). Cyprian can write not too long afterwards congratulating them on their release (*Ep*. 61). Their recall may possibly lie behind Valerian's (much exaggerated) reputation for initially regarding Christians with favour (as witnessed by Dionysius of Alexandria in the same – tendentious – festal letter to Hermammon, *ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.10.3).[120] We are without information as to the circumstances which gave rise to these relegations, but the periods of exile of these 'holy men' would indeed have coincided with the collapse and downfall of Gallus' principate sufficient to lend credence to Dionysius' loaded version of history.

[119] Cypr. *Ep*. 60 (congratulating Cornelius on his confession); *Chronog. 354* in *Chron. Min.* I.75 (banishment and death at Centumcellae); *Liber Pont*. XXII (Duchesne (1955–7) I.150, reflecting the worthless *Passio*). Cyprian does not appear to learn of Cornelius' confession until about May, 253 (see G. W. Clarke 1986: 8ff.).

[120] A possible context is a conciliatory gesture, recalling exiles generally, upon the legitimation of Valerian and Gallienus as emperors: compare the recent case of Philip: *CJ* IX.51.7 (*generalis indulgentia nostra reditum exsulibus seu deportatis tribuit*).

Elsewhere, in a letter written in the summer of the previous year, 252, Cyprian addresses Cornelius (at that time still in Rome) whose church can be regarded at the time as greatly flourishing, i.e. not threatened with difficulties (*florentissimo illic clero tecum praesidenti*, *Ep*. 59.19). And yet Cyprian has this to say of himself: 'In recent days, also, just as I am writing this letter to you, there has been once again popular outcry in the circus for me to be thrown to the lion: this has been occasioned by the sacrifices which the people have been ordered by a public edict to celebrate' (*ob sacrificia quae edicto proposito celebrare populus iubebatur*) (*Ep*. 59.6.1). Obviously Cornelius (the addressee) and the Roman church are not included in the troubles: this is a local outburst, the edict presumably proclaimed by the local proconsul. One can imagine orders for a public expiation against the plague, at a ceremony in the circus from which the notable figure of the leader of the Christians – popularly blamed for the visitation of the plague through their failure to worship 'Roman gods', e.g. *Ad Demet*. 2, 5 – was enragingly absent.

The following year (253) we do hear in Carthage of anxious premonitions of a threatened persecution, manifested by frequent ominous signs and minatory visions (Cypr. *Epp*. 57, 58) but so far as we know these apprehensions were never actualized: *Epp*. 57, 58 are datable to May 253 at the onset of another summer bringing with it the threat of further deaths in Carthage by the devastating plague (see the contemporary descriptions in *De Mort*. 14, Pontius, *Vit. Cyp*. 9) – and the prospect of similar terrifying scenes in the circus of Carthage.

We know of no troubles elsewhere. There was no 'persecution of Gallus', no continuation of Decius' edict, merely the continuation of intermittent local troubles and isolated incidents to which especially prominent church leaders were constantly liable under the stress of local circumstances – and at a particular season of social and political instability and insecurity. Following on their unnerving experiences under Decius it was, however, for many Christians a time of heightened apprehensions.[121]

V. PERSECUTION UNDER VALERIAN AND GALLIENUS

So far as we are able to judge, Valerian and Gallienus started off their principate with the same general attitude of *laissez-faire* towards Christians (as likely as not it was no delicately modulated policy, simply that other and more pressing matters of state commanded their attention).[122] That

[121] Lactantius notably fails to dilate on any 'persecution of Gallus' though it would have been congenial to his theme (*DMP* 4f.).

[122] This enabled Dionysius of Alexandria to pen his celebrated (but contentious) version of the benevolence of these opening years of Valerian: 'we have the opportunity . . . to reflect how his affairs stood so long as he was gentle and cordial towards the men of God: for there was no other emperor among

did not mean, however, that Christians were assured of going unmolested. They were still individually liable to hostile attack. For example, a papyrus of 28 February 256 (*P. Oxy.* XLII.3035) reveals orders to arrest from the Egyptian village of Mermertha one 'Petosorapis, son of Horus, Christian': that could mean that the man's Christianity provided the grounds for his arrest.[123] But in all events, in the course of the following year, 257, as the regime now approached the completion of its first *quinquennium*, that *laissez-faire* imperial attitude modified. The date is summer of that year; the orders conveyed to the proconsul in Africa by imperial *litterae* were implemented on 30 August in Carthage (*Acta Procons. Cypr.* 1.1). While we are in ignorance of the precise and immediate circumstances which may have triggered off the dispatch of these *litterae*,[124] we do chance to have two precious documents which convey at a more general level the official reasoning that lay behind them.

(1) Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, in the course of defending his actions under persecution against defamation from a brother bishop named Germanus, has occasion to quote the *ipsissima verba* from the official court records of his trial before Aemilianus (at the time vice-prefect of Egypt)[125] in Alexandria. Dionysius was accompanied by a fellow-presbyter (Maximus), three deacons (Faustus, Eusebius, Chaeremon), and 'one of the brethren who were in Alexandria at the time from Rome' (= Marcellus ?). (There seems to have occurred already a court appearance followed by an adjournment while Dionysius and his clerical companions were left time to think things over.)

But listen to the actual words which were spoken by both of us just as they are recorded in the official proceedings:

Dionysius, Faustus, Maximus, Marcellus and Chaeremon having been brought in, Aemilianus, the vice-prefect, said: 'And I also talked with you off the record,

his predecessors – not even those alleged to have been openly Christians – who was so sympathetically and favourably disposed towards them as he manifestly was, welcoming them as he did at the start with the greatest warmth and friendliness. Indeed his whole household was not just filled with God-fearing men; it was a very church of God' (*ap.* Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.10.3).

[123] Eusebius – seldom strong on precise chronology before his own day – places the martyrdom of Marinus in Caesarea (Pal.) at a time 'when the churches everywhere were at peace'; Theotecnus is the bishop. By implication Eusebius places the event after the 'peace of Gallienus': but the narrative mentions emperors (plural). Is it feasible that this might mean Marinus' death occurred in this period 253–7? (*Hist. Eccl.* VII.15).

[124] Dionysius certainly assigns – unverifiably – the cause to the fanatical evil counsels and wicked profanities of Macrianus the elder (conveniently defeated and discredited at the time of writing) – his diabolical powers were being thwarted by the 'pure and holy men' i.e. Christians. Gallienus' father Valerian is thereby indirectly exonerated of full blame whilst Gallienus himself goes carefully unmentioned in the whole affair, *ap.* Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.10.4ff. For a full study of the persecution of Valerian (and references to other literature), see Schwarte (1989) 103–63.

[125] L. Mussius Aemilianus: *PIR*[2] M757; Pflaum, *Carrières* II.925–7 (no. 349); J. R. Rea on *P. Oxy.* XLIII.3112.

discussing the clemency which our emperors have displayed towards you: they have in effect granted you the power to save yourselves, if only you are willing to adopt that which is according to nature, worshipping gods that preserve their empire and abandoning those that are contrary to nature.'

'What, then, is your response to this? I do not imagine that you are going to show yourselves ungrateful for their clemency, seeing that what they are urging you to do is to adopt the better course.'

To this Dionysius replied: 'It is not true that all men worship all gods but every group worships certain gods in whom they believe. So in our case there is the one god, the creator of the universe, the one who in fact entrusted the empire into the hands of the most pious Augusti, Valerian and Gallienus. This is the god whom we both venerate and worship and to whom we offer prayers without ceasing for their empire, petitioning that it may continue unshaken.'

Aemilianus, the vice-prefect, said to them: 'Well, then, who is stopping you from worshipping him as well, if indeed he is a god, along with the gods that are according to nature? You were ordered to worship gods – gods that everyone knows.'

Dionysius answered: 'We do not worship any other.'

Aemilianus, the vice-prefect, said to them: 'I perceive that you are being at once ungrateful and unappreciative of the generosity of our august emperors. You shall, therefore, no longer stay in this city: instead, you will be despatched to the regions of Libya, at a place call Cephro. This is the place I have selected, in conformity with the command of our august emperors.'

'And on no account will it be lawful for either you or anyone else to hold assemblies or to enter the "cemeteries", as they are termed. But should anyone be shown not to have been at this place I have ordered or is detected at any meeting, he is going to bring himself into jeopardy. Rest assured: this will be stringently enforced.'

'Be off, therefore, to the place to which you have been ordered.'

(*ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.11.6ff.)

The official concerns, we can observe, are for worship to be given to known gods (not 'unnatural' ones) who preserve the empire and for public conformity to be displayed as part of the process of winning that preservation of the state (the 'unnatural' religious assemblies of Christians are, as a corollary, to be forbidden). Dionysius' attempt to sidestep the imperial demands is telling: Christians already pray for the continued security of the empire without ceasing, and to the one God that matters. Maintaining *pax* with the divine was understood by both sides to be the underlying objective. And both sides appear to agree in closely interpreting the course of contemporary history theologically.

(2) The court records (dated 30 August 257) are also preserved for Cyprian's appearance before the proconsul in Carthage.[126]

[126] A version of these *Acta* appears to have been in circulation in Numidia within months of the event (referred to in Cypr. *Ep*. 77.2.1), and Pontius, *Vit. Cypr*. 11 (written shortly after Cyprian's martyrdom)

The proconsul Paternus said to Cyprian the bishop: 'The most revered emperors Valerian and Gallienus have honoured me with a letter in which they command that those who do not practise Roman religion must observe Roman rites. Accordingly I have made inquiries in your connection. What is your answer to me?'

Cyprian the bishop said: 'I am a Christian and a bishop. I know no other gods beside the one, true God who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them. This is the God we Christians serve, to this God we pray day and night for you and for all mankind, and for the well-being of the emperors themselves.'

The proconsul Paternus said: 'And so you persist in this way of thinking?'

Cyprian the bishop answered: 'A good way of thinking which brings knowledge of God cannot be changed.'

The proconsul Paternus said: 'Will you be able, then, to go into exile to the city of Curubis, in accordance with the orders of Valerian and Gallienus?'

Cyprian the bishop said: 'I go.'

The proconsul Paternus said: 'They have honoured me by writing not only about bishops but also about presbyters. I want you to tell me, therefore, who are the presbyters dwelling in this city?'

Cyprian the bishop answered: 'By excellent and beneficial legislation you have outlawed informers. Hence I am unable to reveal or denounce them; but they are to be found in their own cities. Our rules forbid anyone to surrender himself voluntarily and you strongly disapprove of this as well; they may not, therefore, surrender themselves but they will be discovered if you search for them.'

The proconsul Paternus said: 'I shall certainly make a search for them today from this community.'

Cyprian the bishop said; 'If you make inquiries they will be discovered.'

The proconsul Paternus said: 'I shall discover them.' And he added: 'They also command that no meetings are to be held in any place nor shall they enter the cemeteries. If, therefore, anyone does not observe this salutary command, he will suffer capital punishment.'

(*Acta Procons. Cypr.* 1)

We are able to discern the same stress on public conformity in acceptable ritual action (*Romanas caerimonias recognoscere*),[127] and Cyprian's defensive insistence that Christians pray without ceasing for the well-being of the emperors' persons (*pro incolumitate imperatorum ipsorum*) indicates what he, too, perceived to be the imperial motivation behind that stress on ritual conformity. Higher clerical orders only – involved in performing the 'unnatural' Christian *caerimoniae* – are concerned, viz. bishops, presbyters (deacons, as well – Dionysius' companions included three deacons), and Christians' ritual assemblies themselves and their sacred grounds are proscribed. There is a growing sense that the Christian *caerimoniae*, far from being mere harmless aberrations, are positively offensive to the 'natural' gods.

can refer to transcripts of this trial (*et quid sacerdos Dei proconsule interrogante responderit, sunt acta quae referant*).

[127] For explication of this phrasing, see Freudenberger (1978).

We do not chance to have a great deal of evidence for the actual implementation of these orders, save for Africa Proconsularis (the case of Cyprian), Egypt (the case of Dionysius and his five companions), and Numidia (the two exiled bishops Agapius and Secundinus in *Acta Marian. et Jacob*. 3). Much will have depended on the initiative and zeal of the individual governor, the eminence of local clerics (too much in the public eye to allow them to be overlooked), and, of course, popular hostility against Christians in a particular area which could lead to the reporting of Christian lawbreaking or of the whereabouts of Christian clergy. Governors, however indifferently they felt towards religious matters or however anxious they were to avoid needless trouble, could not let themselves be seen too blatantly to disregard entirely the emperors' wishes: they had careers to foster. At least in one sector of Numidia the grinding hardships and ordeals that were to confront Christian clergy and laity alike were painfully real. Cyprian's *Epp*. 76–79 (written whilst Cyprian was still in exile at Curubis) reveal not just exile but condemnation *in metallum* of bishops (nine are named) along with (unnamed) presbyters and deacons – together with laity (including women and children, *Ep*. 76.6.2). Deaths have occurred (*Ep*. 76.1.2). So far as we know this first stage of the Valerianic persecution singled out higher clergy only: lower clergy and laity would become involved only if they infringed (under threat of capital penalty) the regulations regarding assemblies and cemeteries – which we must presume these Numidian Christians, laity and clergy alike, have done.[128] We are simply left to extrapolate from these samples for other regions of the empire.

The version we have of Gallienus' later rescript of toleration certainly implies that Christian places of worship (*topoi*) might be subject to sequestration (and Christian cemetery grounds might be seized, as we gather from the further imperial response which Eusebius paraphrases in *Hist. Eccl.* VII.13 *ad fin.*). The *litterae* of 257 did not merely convey a clear licence from the emperors, if a governor chanced to be so inclined, to outlaw Christian officials and corporate Christian worship: more positive action was being demanded.

But the last decade had given Christians practice in the skills required for evading detection, and the elaborate international network of the brotherhood (witness Cypr. *Ep*. 80) further assisted underground survival. Even those actually apprehended for exemplary treatment and exiled continued their proselytizing activities (so Dionysius declares at Cephro, *ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.11.12f.); they even participated in the (forbidden) assemblies (so Dionysius – defensively – claims at Colluthion, *ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.11.17); they were assailed by Christian visitors, laden with their gifts

[128] Molthagen (1970) 88–92 argues (unpersuasively) that the ban on gatherings of Christians operated only if the clergy failed to comply with the call to sacrifice.

(as Cyprian enjoyed at Curubis, Pont. *Vit. Cypr*. 12; cf. Dionysius both at Cephro, *ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.11.12 and at Colluthion, *ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.11.17); they might continue lavishly to minister to the Christian poor (see Pont. *Vit. Cypr*. 13) or send sustaining support to fellow confessors (Cypr. *Epp*. 76–79).

The Roman senate appears to have written to Valerian in the east requesting official guidance for dealing with such public defiance of the imperial wishes (as far as we know, the clergy of Rome had all so far managed to survive unharmed). We learn from Cypr. *Ep*. 80 of the contents of the imperial reply:

> 1.1. But you should now be informed that the men whom I had expressly sent over to Rome are back; they were to find out the truth and report to us the terms of the rescript concerning us, for there have been rife a wide variety of unconfirmed rumours.
>
> 1.2. The truth of the matter stands as follows.
>
> Valerian has sent a rescript to the senate, directing that bishops, presbyters, and deacons are to be put to death at once but that senators, high-ranking officials, and Roman knights are to lose their status as well as forfeit their property, and that if, after being so dispossessed, they should persist in remaining Christians, they are then to suffer capital punishment as well. Furthermore, that matrons are to be dispossessed of their property and despatched into exile and that any members of Caesar's household who had either confessed earlier or should have done so now, are to have their possessions confiscated and are to be sent in chains, assigned to the imperial estates.
>
> 1.3. Moreover, the emperor Valerian has added to his address a copy of the letter which he has written to the governors of the provinces concerning us. We are daily awaiting the arrival of this letter . . .
>
> 1.4. You should be further informed that Sixtus was put to death in the cemetery on 6 August and, along with him, four deacons. Indeed, the prefects in Rome are daily pressing on with this persecution: those who are brought before them are being condemned, with their estates forfeited to the imperial treasury.

The fact that the senate – it would appear – had written to the emperor requesting guidance in dealing with prominently recalcitrant Christians (whether notables of the church or of society and of Caesar's own household) suggests there were conscientious enemies of Christianity to be found within the conservative upper social circles of Rome: Valerian himself need have been no different. (Porph. *Vit. Plot*. 16 echoes the resentment felt at the spread of Christianity, and other outlandish sects, in contemporary Rome at the expense of the 'old philosophy'.) And we need to remember that the Christian intelligence network would have known of the senate's referral months before the imperial response came back from the east – hence long weeks of apprehensive waiting by Christian communities (Cypr. *Ep*. 80.1.1). The virulence of the mood of hostility is reflected in orders which

entailed the recall and retrial of clergy already sentenced under the first stage (thus the African bishops Agapius and Secundinus brought back from exile to their execution, *Acta Marian. et Jacob*. 2.5ff., as likewise Cyprian himself),[129] or harsher treatment for already confessed (and presumably sentenced) *Caesariani*. But the most devastating illustration of the violent change in temper comes with the stark news of the execution on the spot of pope Sixtus and four of his deacons at the cemetery of Callistus in Rome (§1.4). This heralds the bloodiest persecution known before the days of Diocletian.

An ingredient in Valerian's decision may have been reaction to the affront cast upon the imperial dignity and Roman law by open Christian recalcitrance. But an administrator, however hotly outraged, however hastily he may have been obliged to act whilst in the midst of military campaigning, would still have realized the grave consequences of these orders to be distributed throughout the empire. This was persecution, because it was thought it mattered that Christian religious leaders should be extirpated and that Christians in positions of prominence should not be allowed to be seen publicly to repudiate 'Roman ceremonies' with impunity. The proconsul in Africa, putting into effect the new ordinances on 14 September 258 in Carthage, provides our most immediate gloss; he could well echo some of the phrases in the preamble of the imperial rescript itself:

> Galerius Maximus conferred with his judicial council and then with great difficulty declared: 'You have long lived with sacrilegious views and you have gathered to yourself many vicious men in a conspiracy. You have set yourself up as an enemy to the Roman gods and to their sacred rites. And the pious and most revered emperors Valerian and Gallienus, Augusti, and Valerian, the most noble Caesar, have been unable to bring you back to the observance of their own sacred rituals.'
>
> 'Therefore, having been apprehended as the instigator and ringleader in atrocious crime, you are yourself going to be made an example to those whom you have gathered together through your criminal actions. The authority of the law shall be ratified by means of your blood.'
>
> He then read out the verdict from a tablet: 'It is the sentence that Thascius Cyprianus be executed by the sword.'
>
> Cyprian the bishop said: 'Thanks be to God.'
>
> (*Acta Procon. Cypr*. 4)

For the Roman governing circles, at least, it still remained incomprehensible that Roman citizens should fail so signally in their civic duties of honouring their Roman gods and acknowledging their sacred rites ('civic duties' – rather than 'civil rights' – was certainly their inherited mode of thinking).

[129] Governors would appear to have had some advance advice, recalling exiles, in readiness, to closer locations: thus Cyprian from Curubis to house detention in his Carthaginian *horti* (*Acta Procons. Cypr*. 2.1), Dionysius from Libyan Cephro to Colluthion, not far from Alexandria and other Egyptian confessors to villages in the Mareotic *nome* (*ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.11.1ff.). See also Whitehorne (1977).

The comportment of Cyprian, himself of the local curial aristocracy but now a Christian bishop, highlights this clash of perceived duties – and ideological stances. Cyprian had spent a whole year in anxious expectation of this moment before the proconsul's tribunal. His inspired words, uttered a year before as confessor, had been promptly transcribed, treasured, and given wide circulation and lavish laudation (witness *Ep.* 77.2, written from mines in Numidia; and cf. Pont. *Vit. Cypr.* 11). A vision of his as confessor had been relayed in detail and interpreted as prophetic of this very day (so Pont. *Vit. Cypr.* 12f.). In recent weeks he had spent long days with his assembled clergy meditating with them on this very moment of his *agon* (*Ep.* 80.1.1), and then, in confident expectation of the end, he had rallied the brethren with a series of rousing exhortations (Pont. *Vit. Cypr.* 14 *ad fin.*). He had also contrived, by eluding the proconsul's agents, that he should be seen to go forward to take his seat as assessor on the celestial tribunal (as he would have to put it) in the midst of his own Carthaginian church (*Ep.* 81.1f.): for the church was in the bishop (*Ep.* 66.8.3) and the witnessing people would thus become partners in the graces, and the *gloria*, of their own inspirited bishop.

The entire Carthaginian congregation (*universus populus fratrum*), so prepared and exhorted, thronged to witness the noble spectacle; they all kept vigil outside his quarters throughout the night, then accompanied him to the place of execution. There Cyprian enacted an *exemplum* of conscious dignity, a Christian *nobile letum*, at last putting into deed the words he had so often preached. The brethren spread out cloths and handkerchiefs to catch the drops of his precious blood; the *cultus* of St Cyprian, bishop and martyr, had begun.

> So Cyprian suffered and his body was laid out nearby to satisfy the curiosity of the pagans. But at nightfall his body was moved from there and, accompanied by tapers and torches, it was conducted with prayers in great triumph to the burial-ground of Macrobius Candidianus the procurator, which lies on the Mappalian Way near the fishponds. And there it was buried.
>
> (*Acta Procons. Cypr.* 5.6)

Within twelve months fellow martyrs could be numbered throughout the empire securely attested all the way from the west (bishop Fructuosus and his two deacons Augurius and Eulogius, beheaded in Tarraco, Spain 21 January 259) – the location being supplied by Prudentius, *Peristephanon* 6), through the central Mediterranean (eventually, in Rome, all told, the bishop – one of his presbyters, all of his seven deacons, a sub-deacon, a reader and a doorkeeper)[130] as far as the east (Priscus, Malcus, Alexander and a Marcionite woman fed to the beasts in Palestine, Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.12).

[130] Cypr. *Ep.* 80.1.4 combined with *Liber Pont.* 25 (Duchesne (1955–7) 1.155).

But it is the south, in the African provinces, which is especially rich in testimony. Thus the Passion of Montanus and Lucius records (for Africa Proconsularis) the deaths in prison of two recently baptized Christians (Primolus and Donatianus, ch. 2); a presbyter, Victor, ch. 7.2; Quartillosa, her husband and her son, ch. 8; bishop Successus, Paulus and their companions, ch. 21.8; as well as Lucius, Montanus, Flavianus, Julianus and Victoricus (presumably all clerics), ch. 2. And in Numidia in the Passion of Marian and James we encounter many in prison (in Cirta) to be sent on eventually for trial (and death) before the governor at Lambaesis: altogether there are the bishops Agapius and Secundinus, ch. 3; James a deacon, Marian a lector, along with others of the clergy, chs. 10, 11.3; lay martyrs, chs. 5.10, 9, 10, including Aemilianus, an equestrian, ch. 8 (a unique attestation for one of the specific lay categories of victim) and Tertulla and Antonia, ch. 11. The terms of Valerian's rescript of 258 had given rise to a deeply divisive and bloody conflict throughout the empire.

We are entirely dependent on Eusebius for our knowledge how that division and conflict was resolved.

> But not long afterwards Valerian underwent slavery at the hands of the barbarians, and his son, succeeding to the sole power, conducted the government with greater prudence, and immediately by means of edicts (*programmata*) put an end to the persecution against us. He granted free power to those who presided over the word to perform their accustomed duties, by a rescript (*antigraphē*) which runs as follows: 'The Emperor Caesar Publius Licinius Gallienus Pius Felix Augustus to Dionysius and Pinnas and Demetrius and the other bishops. I have ordered that the benefits of my bounty should be spread throughout all the world, namely that they should depart from the places of worship. Therefore you too are entitled to make use of the provisions contained in my rescript, so that none may molest you. And this thing which it is within your power to accomplish has long since been granted by me. Therefore Aurelius Quirinius, the *procurator summae rei* (?), will observe the provisions granted by me.'
>
> Let this, which for the sake of greater clearness was translated from the Latin, be inserted. And there is also another ordinance of the same emperor, which was issued to other bishops, giving permission to recover the sites of the cemeteries, as they are called.
>
> (*Hist. Eccl.* VII.13).

Valerian's ignominious capture is best dated to early summer 260.[131] Eusebius certainly places the revoking, by imperial edicts (*programmata*), of the previous orders against Christians as an immediate (*autika*) reaction to the disaster. We know no more than that – and this may be Eusebius' own interpretation, a theological reading of the dire event by the imperial authorities. That is a fair surmise, but there were no doubt proffered also

[131] The evidence is conveniently reviewed by Potter, *Prophecy* 331ff.

prudential counsels to avoid at all costs exacerbating internal strife and divisions (as Valerian's second rescript had manifestly been doing) in an empire that must have seemed at the time perilously fragmenting – and perhaps to disassociate the now sole emperor from policies identified with his father Valerian.

Dionysius and his fellow bishops have petitioned the emperor and the imperial response which they receive[132] allowing freedom of worship asserts that the ordinance has been operative 'long since' (ἤδη πρὸ πολλοῦ): given the successive revolts and civil war in which Egypt has been embroiled (Macrianus and Quietus, Aemilianus (260–1)), the ordinance has not yet been effective there. The Egyptian bishops now have a document guaranteeing their (delayed) rights – and Eusebius has a copy of a further imperial response, assisting bishops in the recovery of their (confiscated) burial grounds.

It is possible to make too much of Gallienus' ordinance: in strict legality Christians are now only back to where they were before Valerian's orders were issued – that is, they are still potentially liable, *qua* Christians, to fall foul of the law. But in revoking those earlier orders, by the very act of having positively to permit unmolested Christian worship, Gallienus was in effect also conceding a major degree of official toleration: some forty years of relative peace follow from this significant move. To those minds inclined to read the events of 257–60 theologically, the Christians' god may now have appeared to be a god of vengeful power – to be treated with due caution.

For a full decade that effective toleration appears basically to have held, so far as our knowledge goes – apart from the case of the soldier Marinus of Caesarea (Pal.)[133] – until under Aurelian (270–5) there was a strong and persistent rumour (Eusebius and Lactantius are both reporting within their youthful personal experience) that the emperor was intending to initiate a persecution, an intention thwarted at the very last moment by the emperor's death (275). Lactantius, *DMP* 6.2 dramatically has the letters to governors issued but not yet reaching the more distant provinces, while Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* VII.30.21 has the hand of the Divine Justice staying the emperor's arm as he is about to pen his signature to the decrees! Unfulfilled rumours are by nature unverifiable and all we can say is that it would not have been out of character for Aurelian to have thought, and planned, like a Valerian before him – or, eventually, a Diocletian and a Galerius after him. Constantine,

[132] Strictly speaking they have obtained an imperial *subscriptio* to their *libellus*: should we conjecture a personal presentation of that petition by one or more of the bishops before the imperial court? That would have constituted a symbolic moment.

[133] Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.15: though we have names involved – governor Achaeus, bishop Theotecnus, Christian senator Astyrius – the date cannot be fixed securely; cf. n. 123 above. Similar individual cases could well have occurred elsewhere.

Oratio ad Sanctos 25, can later rank Aurelian with Decius and Valerian as persecutors who deservedly met with miserable deaths.

In the (earlier) dispute over the church house at Antioch – did it belong to the (now deposed) Paul of Samosata or to the (newly installed) Domnus? – no doubt the petition to Aurelian by the party of Domnus appealed to the ordinance of Gallienus, an imperial predecessor, allowing bishops unmolested access to their places of worship (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.30.19; cf. VII.13). Aurelian assigned the building 'to those with whomsoever the bishops of the doctrine (*tou dogmatos*) in Italy and Rome were in communication'.[134] From our perception it marks a significant moment: the realities of the civil place of the Christian churches within the social organization of the empire are being officially recognized – and a presage set for Constantine forty years later in his dealings with the Donatists. But for contemporaries, with a growing church now a familiar, if still minor, presence in most communities (especially urban), the significance may not have been visible: the civil place of the churches had simply long been a social reality.

VI. THE GREAT PERSECUTION

Mani (b. 216) and his disciple missionaries, the narrow band of high-achieving 'Elect' and their devoted faithful, the 'Hearers', had in the course of the third century made remarkable proselytizing progress both inside and outside the permeable boundaries of the Roman world, especially in the eastern empire. Violently outspoken opposition had come both from the Christian orthodox (as well as from pagan philosophers) from within the empire[135] as also from inside the Persian empire, from zealous Zoroastrian clergy, led by the Magian official Kartir, with not only Mani himself (d. 276) and his followers but orthodox Christians as well persecuted.[136] In (very probably) late March 302 Diocletian replied from Alexandria to an anxious inquiry and report (*sollertia tua serenitati nostrae retulit*) forwarded by the proconsul of Africa concerning these upstart Manichees. Not only the ferociousness of the measures to extirpate the infectious poison but the grandiloquent preamble on the religious, moral and political grounds (typically, not disaggregated) for leaving traditional religion peacefully

[134] For full analysis, Millar (1971).

[135] Examples are Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.31 (possibly a later insertion?); the late third-century circular letter, perhaps issued from the chancery of Theonas, bishop of Alexandria, warning the faithful against being deceived by the 'madness of the Manichaeans', who require 'menstrual blood for the abominations of their madness', *P. Ryl.* III.469, ll. 30ff. (ed. Roberts (1938) 42); the neo-Platonist Alexander of Lycopolis, *Tractatus de placitis Manichaeorum*.

[136] Brock (1978); Lieu (1992) esp. 79ff.; Brunner (1974) 105f. (l. 30: 'And the Jews and Buddhists and Brahmans and Nazarites and Christians and Maktag and Manichaeans in the kingdom are being smitten').

undisturbed are highly revealing of the temper and the thinking current in the imperial court.

> We have heard that the Manichaeans, concerning whom your Conscientiousness (*sollertia tua*) has reported to our Serenity (*serenitas nostra*), have set up new and hitherto unheard of sects in opposition to the older creeds so that they might cast out the doctrines vouchsafed to us in the past by divine favour, for the benefit of their own depraved doctrine. They have sprung forth very recently like novel and unexpected monstrosities from the race of the Persians – a nation hostile to us – and have made their way into our empire, where they are committing many outrages, disturbing the tranquillity of the people and even inflicting grave harm on the civic communities (*civitates*): our fear is that with the passage of time, they will endeavour, as usually happens, to infect the modest and tranquil Roman race, people of an innocent nature, and our whole empire with the damnable customs (*consuetudines*) and the perverse laws (*leges*) of the Persians as with the poison of a malignant serpent.
>
> (*Coll.* xv.3.3f.)

Whilst the Persian connexion is clearly a major determining factor in Diocletian's reaction, the preceding paragraphs make plain that his fundamental objection is to the sacrilegious disturbance of what has been established since antiquity (*quae semel ab antiquis statuta et definita*), laid down by the immortal gods for the benefit of mankind: 'ancient religion ought not to be criticized by a new-fangled one' (*neque reprehendi a nova vetus religio deberet*). The vulnerability of Christianity to this enunciated line of thinking is obvious, and the savage measures enjoined should have given Christians pause, however hateful to them may have been the 'heresy' now under attack:

> We order the authors and leaders of the sect [= the Elect], to be subjected to a very severe penalty, namely, to be incinerated in fiery flames, along with their abominable scriptures: but their followers [= the Hearers], who are persistently obstinate we order to be punished with death, and we ordain that their property be confiscated to our treasury. If any persons of the official classes, or of any rank, no matter what, or of superior status (*si qui sane etiam honorati aut cuiuslibet dignitatis vel maiores personae*), have betaken themselves to this unheard of, base, and utterly infamous sect, to this doctrine of the Persians, you will see that their property is attached to our treasury and that they are themselves committed to the mines of Phaeno or Proconnesus. In order that this abomination of wickedness be rooted out completely from our most blessed age, your Devotion will not delay to obey with all haste the orders and regulations of our Tranquillity.[137]
>
> (*Coll.* xv.36–8)

Christian apprehensions at this harsh treatment of what would have been seen by many as simply yet another variant of a Christians sect were no

[137] Actual Manichaean victims are lost from the record, as also are any caught up in the ensuing Great Persecution.

doubt exacerbated by the fact that it was only a year or two before (in all likelihood)[138] that the emperors Diocletian and Galerius had become infuriated at repeated failures during the taking of the sacred auspices: this was put down to the malign effect of Christians present, making the sign of the cross on their foreheads. In enraged reaction, not only those attending the rites but all serving in the palace were required to sacrifice (on pain of flogging) and letters were then despatched to the army commanders requiring their soldiers to sacrifice (on pain of dismissal). The eastern imperial courts and the soldiers who served under their auspices were being purged of the offending Christians.[139] Forty years of relative peace since the toleration of Gallienus were coming to an end.[140] But this imperial mood of moral and religious outrage, combined with a passion for disciplined conformity, was no sudden novelty. A few years previously, for example, in 295, an edict was issued from Damascus[141] on the moral offence of incestuous marriages within degrees of kindred long forbidden by ancient Roman law, marriages roundly declared to be a sacrilegious abomination and a barbarian savagery by which men 'plunged into illicit unions with promiscuous lust no better than cattle and wild beasts without a thought for morality and piety'. The preamble didactically insists that it is the strict duty of the pious and religious emperors to venerate and preserve the chaste and sacred precepts of Roman law: 'For there can be no doubt that the immortal gods themselves will favour and be at peace with the Roman name, as they have always been in the past, if we have seen to it that all subject to our rule entirely lead a pious, religious, peaceable and chaste life in every respect.' And the edict concludes, declaring 'Our laws protect only what is holy and venerable, and accordingly the Roman majesty has attained to so great a plenitude by the favour of all the divine powers, for it has wisely entwined about all its laws with the bonds of piety and the observance of morality.'[142] The logic of this thinking, with its appeal to antiquity and religious uniformity – and prosperity – could be ominously turned against adherents of any deviant 'barbarian superstition'. But whereas it had been feasible for Roman authorities any time over the preceding forty years to draw the logical conclusions from these premises, it requires an explanation why it was eventually now, on 23 February 303 that the empire was

[138] The dating is put by Lactantius, *DMP* 10.6 as *interiecto aliquanto tempore* before Diocletian winters at Nicomedia in 302/3. Whilst Lactantius focuses on Diocletian's role in *DMP* 10.1ff., both emperors were in fact present (implied by Lact. *Div. Inst.* IV.27.4f.). The location is *in partibus Orientis*: was this in Antioch in early 299, or was it later in 301? See Barnes, *NE* 55, 63f.

[139] The (more partial and provincial?) version of Eusebius implies that Galerius had instigated a purge of his own entourage and army on his own 'long (*eti palai*) before the movement of the other emperors': *Hist. Eccl.* VIII app. 1; cf. VIII.1.7; VIII.4.2ff., with confessing Christian soldiers forfeiting their rank (or choosing to leave the army) and a few actually being executed.

[140] Note that in this interim, the *Acta* preserve accounts of Christian conscientious objectors, the most reliable of which are those of the recruit Maximilian, martyred on 12 March 295: the punishment is for refusal to serve (*Milita, ne pereas* (*Acta Maximiliani* 2)).

[141] By Galerius? See Barnes, *NE* 62 n. 76. [142] *Coll.* VI.4. (esp. 1, 2, 6).

plunged, by stages – but by no means uniformly or continuously – into a bloody decade of turmoil involving horrifying human pain and suffering as the Great Persecution against the Christians got under way. After all, the senior Augustus, Diocletian, had been in power now some eighteen years.

Both Lactantius and Eusebius (even more unequivocally) make Galerius, the Caesar in the east, the originator and author of the deviation in policy. Eusebius' version is without nuance (e.g. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.8.4; VIII.16.2; VIII app. 1–4), whereas Lactantius has a (maliciously slanted but basically credible) account of lengthy secret debates between Diocletian and Galerius (by nature, beyond documentation) during the winter months of 302/3, along with systematic consultation of court *amici* and advisers, civil and military – as well as pagan intellectuals hostile to Christianity (e.g. the anonymous philosopher of *Div. Inst.* V.2.3ff., Sossianus Hierocles in *DMP* 16.4, *Div. Inst.* V.2.12ff., 3.22) – with a reluctant Diocletian ultimately overpersuaded by an oracular response from Apollo of Didyma (Lact. *DMP* 11.3ff.; cf. 31.1). All we are able to say is that Lactantius, as eye-witness in Nicomedia, reflects informed rumour current at the time: it is about as close as we can hope to get. And it is the virtue of his version that the final decision is still made to lie with Diocletian, pressured though he may well have been by the ferocious Galerius (so depicted by the tendentious Lactantius).[143] A power struggle between a tiring Diocletian and his more junior colleague, the Caesar Galerius, centred on a policy issue in which Diocletian was inextricably entangled by the logic of his own premises, makes realistic sense.[144] The inherent weakness of Roman polytheism – pluralistic, fluid, assimilative, permeable – to maintain a consistent long-term policy was once more revealed.

On 23 February 303 the first edict against the Christians was posted up in Nicomedia, the current imperial residence in the east. The previous day the edict had been issued and, symbolically, the church building in Nicomedia, on high ground in view of the imperial palace, was searched for its scriptures (which were burned), plundered of its valuables and then razed to the ground. The terms of the edict now posted enjoined, *inter alia*, that church buildings everywhere were to be destroyed, that the scriptures and liturgical books should be burned and church plate and other valuables confiscated, that Christians who enjoyed social status or juridical privileges should be reduced to the status of *humiliores* (and be liable to torture), that litigants (including Christians) be required to offer sacrifice before any legal

[143] Note that Constantine, at the time in Nicomedia, later attributes the blame to Diocletian, *ap*. Eus. *Vit. Const.* II.50f. (Letter of 324), *Oratio ad Sanctos* 25. See also Davies (1989).

[144] There are standard accounts of the Great Persecution, the classic analysis being by de Ste Croix (1954), as well as the rich commentary of Moreau (1954) on Lact. *DMP*. For the political and religious context, consult Barnes, *CE* chs. 2 and 9. I make no attempt to provide any systematic coverage of reasonably authenticated victims.

action was heard, and that Christian (imperial ?) freedmen, if recalcitrant, should be re-enslaved.[145]

By spring 303 the edict was posted in Palestine, by early June it was already in operation in Africa.[146] The penalties for infringement were probably not specified: there were adequate precedents for governors to choose from for defiance of imperial orders and whilst Lactantius can report that Diocletian prevailed in 'ordering that the business be carried out without bloodshed' (Lact. *DMP* 11.8), this clearly would not prevent the exercise of the death penalty, at their discretion, when judges came to deal with any recusant. Not only were the Caesars to be seen putting their own households in order:[147] corporate church organization was under attack and, typically, the public presence of the church was to be erased whether in physical terms or in terms of the socially prominent. Whilst creating a tense atmosphere of peril and undoubted anxiety this edict still left the church rank and file, being *humiliores*, not directly threatened unless involved in litigation, and even then various forms of evasion, ranging from the use of proxies to bribery, were time-honoured recourses available.[148]

This first edict was put into operation in both halves of the empire, although in Constantius' sphere (Britain, the Gauls) Lactantius insists that at most church buildings were destroyed and even this is explicitly denied by Eusebius.[149] Apologetic bias aside, Constantius could well have had little sympathy for the operation, an initiative of his eastern colleagues (Lact. *DMP* 15.6); likewise, there were governors later who could boast not having shed any Christian blood (Lact. *Div. Inst.* v.11.13). But there is no doubt about the effects in the territory of Constantius' western senior colleague, Maximian: in Rome (pope Marcellinus was a *traditor*, or even worse),[150] in Sicily (*Acta Eupli*, at Catania on 12 August 304),[151] in Spain (bishop Ossius of Corduba can claim to be a confessor, *ap.* Athan. *Hist. Arian.* 44.1) and above all, in Africa. As the handing over of the sacred scriptures for destruction (*traditio*) was regarded in the west as a most

[145] The major terms can be put together by combining Lact. *DMP* 13.1, cf. 15.5 with Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.2.4 and *Mart. Pal.* 1.1.

[146] Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.2.4; *MP*(S) *pr.* (March/April); *Acta Felicis* (5 June at Tibiuca).

[147] This appears to be the meaning of Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.2.4: 'those in households (τοὺς δ'ἐν οἰκετιαῖς), if they persisted in their profession of Christianity, would be deprived of their liberty', referring presumably to the *Caesariani* (cf. rescript of Valerian, Cypr. *Ep.* 80.1.2).

[148] *P. Oxy.* XXXI.2601 (Copres uses as proxy his brother (a pagan?) to sacrifice, before pursuing a lawsuit about family property); cf. Peter of Alexandria (Easter 306) *can.* 5 (proxies), *can.* 6f. (use of slave go-betweens), *can.* 11 (bribery) (*PG* XVIII.473f.).

[149] Lact. *DMP* 15.7; Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.13.13, cf. *Vit. Const.* 1.13 (although in *Mart. Pal.* 13.12 he does includes Gaul in the western areas that suffered the effects of persecution). Opt. 1.22 (CSEL XXVI.25f.): Donatist bishops declare flatteringly *immunis est Gallia* under Constantius.

[150] For the tangled story see Barnes, *CE* 38, and nn. on pp. 303–4.

[151] Euplus provocatively carries 'the holy gospels' which he refuses to surrender: arrested 29 April 304 and tried and martyred on 12 August 304 (the Latin version has him executed with his book of the gospels hung about his neck).

heinous sin, the post-persecution witch-hunts, especially prompted by the rigorist Donatists in Africa, have provided us with invaluable vignettes of the implementation of this edict. Thus the *Gesta apud Zenophilum* reveal the search made in Cirta on 19 May 303, not only of the church house (and an inventory made of its plate and numerous chattels) but also of the houses of the seven readers, confiscating all scriptures there found or surrendered (CSEL XXVI.186ff.). The *Acta Purgationis Felicis* clear Felix of Aptungi of charges of surrendering or burning the scriptures (CSEL XXVI.203f.), the Acts of the Council of Cirta, 4 March 305 (Aug. *c. Cresc.* III.27.30) disclose varieties of evasion (Donatus of Calama surrendering medical *codices*, Victor of Rustica four illegible gospels, Marinus of Aquae Tibilitanae some papers (*cartulas*), but not the scriptural *codices*) whereas Mensurinus could claim surrendering to the flames only heretical works (*quaecumque reproba scripta haereticorum*: Aug. *Brev. Coll.* III.13.25). The *Acta Felicis* show what might ensue when the bishop (in this case, of Tibiuca) refused to surrender: Felix was beheaded on 15 July 303 in Carthage: similarly Secundus, bishop of Numidian Tigisis, can mention the many martyrs who 'have been crowned because they did not surrender' (Aug. *c. Cresc.* III.27.30; cf. *Brev. Coll.* III.13.25, 15.27). This was certainly no idle affair.

Nevertheless it has to be emphasized that when Constantius succeeded Maximian as Augustus in 305, all active persecution ceased in the west. The persecution had lasted 'less than two years'[152] and deaths securely known (as opposed to later legend) are not many.[153] The following year (306) saw the actual recovery of church property and full freedom for Christians under Constantine in Britain, the Gauls and Spain (so Lact. *DMP* 24.9 asserts); whereas in the territory under Maxentius' control (Italy, Africa) Christians, though tolerated (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.14.1; Opt. I.18), had to wait a further five years until their properties were restored (311: Aug. *Brev. Coll.* III.18.34) in a last-minute bid by Maxentius to woo Christian support.[154] It is clear that, even so, this restoration had not been fully enforced by the time of the victory of the Milvian Bridge (28 October 312) – as the letter of

[152] Eus. *Mart. Pal.* 13.12: the last dated western martyrdom is that of Crispina, 5 December 304 at Theveste (Africa). (This provides the best evidence for the (doubtful) possibility that the fourth edict was ever enforced in the west.) By February/March 305 the Numidian bishops can hold vituperative meetings in Cirta in the house of Urbanus Donatus (the church being not yet rebuilt) to elect a new bishop to replace the *traditor* Paulus, now deceased (Aug. *c. Cresc.* III.27.30; cf. *Gesta apud Zenophilum*, CSEL XXVI.192f.).

[153] To those already mentioned (Felix, Euplus, Crispina, the Numidian martyrs reported by Secundus) add, for example, Saturninus and companions (numbering forty-six according to the Passion (*PL* VIII.689), although the young Hilarianus appears to survive; 12 Feb. 304, in Carthage, Aug. *Brev. Coll.* III.17.32); *CIL* VIII.6700 (19353) [Mactar], the martyrs of Milevis (number unspecified) who suffered *in diebus turificationis*. Together they form our best sample of the range of fatal victims, from which we can only speculatively extrapolate.

[154] African Christians were imperilled in 311, under the impression they were hostile to Maxentius, Opt. I.17f.

Constantine to Anullinus, proconsul of Africa, dated to the early months of 313 reveals (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* x.5.15ff.). For all these years Christians would have had to pass by their places of assembly seeing them in ruins and live with an uncertain future (spine-chilling accounts reaching them of events in the east which could equally well befall them also). The persecution had bequeathed, meantime, a rich legacy of disarray and disaccord, especially in Rome and North Africa, over disputed penitential regimes, elections and consecrations. But the Great Persecution proved in the end to be no long-lasting bloody affair for the western empire.

Not so in the east. The violent reaction to the treasonable tearing down by a Christian protestor (Euethius) of the edict posted in Nicomedia on 24 February 303 (Lact. *DMP* 13.2f.; Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.5) and the savage reprisals that followed the two outbreaks of fire in the imperial palace in Nicomedia shortly afterwards, with a violent purge of Christian civil servants, eunuchs and slaves in the imperial service, set the contrasting tone, especially in the immediate environment of the emperors (Diocletian being active in conducting trials personally, Lact. *DMP* 14.3f., 15.1f.; Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.6 – Dorotheus, Gorgonius and Peter being named: cf. *Oratio ad Sanctos* 25). But it is well to remember that whilst deaths with appalling suffering and tortures are a horrifying aspect of our received accounts of these persecutions, especially in the east, such savage legal treatment was not exclusive to Christian prisoners: it is simply one undeniable and brutal fact of the late Roman regime of law.

'Soon afterwards' was issued a follow-up edict (i.e. spring 303 ?), an imperial order (*prostagma basilikon*) to arrest and imprison church leaders everywhere (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.6.8f.; *Mart. Pal.* 1, *pr.*; cf. Lact. *DMP* 15.2). The sequel indicates that this could include anyone of clerical rank: this was a logical extension of the aim to attack corporate church organization and to erase the public presence of the church – as Valerian earlier had aimed to do. No evidence compels us to believe that this order was distributed to the western empire: it applied to the eastern only.

A further imperial letter (*grammata*) followed, as prisons became overcrowded, requiring Christians so arrested to sacrifice (and secure release) with tortures applied to those who resisted (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.6.10; cf. VIII.2.5; *Mart. Pal. pr.*). Every form of physical coercion was used to create recusants, at least in form, and thus to clear the gaols – as well as honour the gods (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.3; *Mart. Pal.*(S) 1.3–5).[155] Deaths were accordingly rare (cf. *Mart. Pal.* 1.4f.: in Palestine the deacon Zacchaeus and the reader and exorcist Alphaeus). Was this intended to be by way of a celebratory amnesty in anticipation of Diocletian's *vicennalia* (in late 303)? Despite Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.6.10 ('how could one here number the multitude of the

[155] See also on forced sacrifice Peter of Alexandria *can.* 14 (*PG* XVIII.505).

martyrs in each province and especially those in Africa and Mauretania'), this order, like its immediate predecessor, appears to have been applied in the east only.

In the second year of the persecution (304/5) and very probably in the early months of 304,[156] Eusebius reports that an imperial letter reached Palestine, a universal order (*katholikon prostagma*) requiring entire civic communities as a body to sacrifice (Eus. *Mart. Pal.* 3.1: reflected in Lact. *DMP* 15.4). No doubt, as was the experience with similar orders earlier under Decius, enforcement was haphazard, particularly given the lack of adequate civic registers, and many would have simply made themselves scarce, escaping detection especially into more rural areas or being hidden by pagan friends.[157] There was presumably, as was the case in the parallel orders of Decius, a time-limit set for its enforcement. The fourteen canons of Peter of Alexandria, a circular issued to Egyptian bishops for Easter 306, appear to have been composed in the aftermath of this new onslaught (and shortly before Maximinus repeated the exercise, more efficiently, in his own diocese). This episcopal circular was written in an endeavour to provide regulations over varieties of lapse, compromise and evasion. Certificates could be issued, but not generally (as appears to have been the case in Decius' orders), only as a means of protection for their possessors against further molestation from enforcing officials (see Peter of Alexandria, *can.* 5 (*PG* XVIII.473ff.)). Nevertheless this constituted outright repression of the Christian cult: defaulting Christians (now lay as well as clerical) could find themselves liable to capital penalties for failure to comply. The evidence is not compelling that this edict, certainly issued throughout the east, was ever promulgated in the west: if it was, it cannot have been enforced systematically.[158] There, the *Acta* of Crispina (Theveste, December 304) provide suspiciously isolated testimony for such a major upheaval (the

[156] The *Acta of Agape, Irene and Chione* (with four others, Agatho, Cassia, Philippa and Eutychia) take place at Thessalonica in late March / 1 April 304 apparently under this ordinance (note *Acta* ch. 3.2).

[157] The grandparents of Basil of Caesarea (Cap.) took to the Pontic hills (presumably to their family estates) for some seven years or so, Greg. Naz. *Or.* XLIII.6 (*PG* XXXVI.501a); the *Acts of Agape, Irene and Chione* 1.2, 5.5 (flight to the mountainous area out of Thessalonica); Meletius ('bishop of the churches in Pontus') was seven years on the run in Palestine, Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.32.27f.; and for flight generally, Peter of Alexandria *can.* 13 (*PG* XVIII.501ff.), Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.2.1 and cf. *Vit. Const.* II.53 (quoting Constantine: Christians flee to safety and freedom of worship to barbarians beyond the imperial frontiers). For concealment by pagans, Athan. *Hist. Arian. Ad Mon.* 64 and cf. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.3.1. Athan. *Vit. Ant.* realistically depicts how Christian life could simply go on away from the urban centres (but note chs. 46f.). For Africa (303) see also *Gesta apud Zenophilum*, CSEL XXVI.186 (*fugivimus in montem Bellonae*).

[158] See n. 152. The best (but still unpersuasive) case for its general enforcement is mounted by Frend (1965) 502f.: individual governors may, nevertheless, have been in communication with the eastern court – just as the proconsul of Africa, Julianus, had consulted Diocletian on the subject of the Manichees (see above).

proconsul is made to claim, ch. 1.7: *omnis Africa sacrificia fecit nec tibi dubium est*).

We can only speculate how Diocletian and Maximian may have regarded their onslaught on Christianity at the time of their joint abdication on 1 May 305: higher matters of state, other than religious, will certainly have preoccupied their attention. But from their perception they would have seen the churches wiped from the landscape, the Christian leadership and organization broken, their revered texts destroyed, their followers cleared from the army and the imperial service, and many satisfying defections from all Christian ranks to the 'Roman gods' (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.3.1 reckoning defections as 'countless' (μυρίοι)) – leaving still no doubt some unimportant but inevitable fanatical Christian diehards. That may have been the view from the eminence of the imperial courts: it need not have been sympathetically shared either by all of the governing classes or urban élites, let alone the general population (popular hostility being noticeably infrequent, with Gaza providing a rarely attested exception in Eus. *Mart. Pal.*(L) 3.1 (A.D. 304)).

Whilst the abdication of Diocletian and Maximian set in train events in the west that led ultimately to the triumphant liberation of Christians, leaving them free to court imperial patronage – and to foment quarrels – it was otherwise in the east. The newly appointed Caesar of the diocese of Oriens, Maximinus, promptly revealed his personal hostility towards Christianity by launching in 306 a vigorous onslaught, in a positive drive to reach down to the level of the general population and exploiting systematically freshly completed and detailed census rolls.[159] His orders (by *grammata*) required city magistrates to compel the whole population (men, women and children) together to make sacrifice and pour libation.[160] No doubt, as before, many Christians managed to evade the demands, especially in districts outside the major *civitates*; and it is a reasonable assumption that this (far more efficient) variation of the Fourth Edict was also issued in the territory of Galerius (the Danubian provinces and Greece, the diocese of Asiana and Pontica): it does, however, go unmentioned by Lactantius. At all events, the previously issued edicts against the Christians were still to be in force there for a further five years, and Eusebius accuses Galerius of relentlessly pressing on with the persecution of Christians (*Hist. Eccl.* VIII.14.9ff.).

Certainly in Maximinus' own territory the pressure for religious conformity continued: the narrative of Eusebius over the years 306–8 can record

[159] On these census rolls, see Barnes, *NE* 227f. and for a (hostile) description of the processes of registration, Lact. *DMP* 23.1ff.

[160] Eus. *Mart. Pal.* 4.8 (both recensions) graphically depicts the enforcement in Caesarea (Pal.).

for Palestine gruesome martyrdoms for every year under the governorships of Urbanus and then of Firmilianus (*Mart. Pal.* 4–8). Eusebius then records 'a short relief and calm' from persecution – including release of confessors condemned to working in the mines of the Thebaid (*Mart. Pal.*(S) 9.1) – lasting, it would appear, from summer 308 until autumn 309, whilst Maximinus was embroiled in imperial politics,[161] only to be broken without warning by further orders sent down by Maximinus through praetorian prefect and provincial governors to the city magistrates both to repair pagan temples and to enforce mass sacrifice (once again) by the entire population: additionally, items for sale at the markets were to be sprinkled with the blood and libations from sacrifices and those entering the baths were similarly to be ritually sprinkled (*Mart. Pal.* 9.2). In a valuable aside Eusebius remarks that even the heathens regarded these latter, provocative, measures as 'harsh and unnecessary' (*Mart. Pal.* 9.3). Reluctant city officials, away from the immediate environment of the Caesar, could go far in thwarting even the imperial will. Nevertheless Eusebius can go on to record (*Mart. Pal.* 9.4–13.10) a whole series of martyrdoms culminating in the horrific scene of 4 May 311 when Silvanus, bishop of Gaza, along with thirty-nine other confessors (deemed too old or infirm to continue working usefully in the copper mines of Phaeno) were executed by decapitation on a single day.

Persecution then ceased, for a few days earlier (posted at Nicomedia on 30 April 311) the dying emperor Galerius in the name of all his imperial colleagues (including Maximinus)[162] had issued a proclamation, couched in the form of a letter, ending persecution, allowing Christians a legal existence and the right of assembly, at the same time encouraging all men to worship the gods in the interests of the state. With this, prisons were opened, those condemned to the mines were released and confessors freed (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.1.7ff.; Lact. *DMP* 35.2). Persecution appeared everywhere now to be, joyously, at an end.

Among all the other arrangements which we are always making for the advantage and benefit of the state, we had earlier sought to set everything right in accordance with the ancient laws and public discipline of the Romans and to ensure that the Christians too, who had abandoned the way of life of their ancestors, should return to a sound frame of mind; for in some way such self-will had come upon these same Christians, such folly had taken hold of them, that they no longer followed those usages of the ancients which their own ancestors perhaps had first instituted,

[161] Adapting the chronology proposed by Barnes, *CE* 153.

[162] Though in our extant versions his name (later subject to *damnatio memoriae*) does not appear, it is clear that it was issued by Galerius on behalf of all three of his imperial colleagues (Lact. *DMP* 36.3); Maximinus, however, 'was by no means pleased with what was written, and instead of making known the letter set forth above gave verbal commands to the rulers under him to relax the war against us' (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.1.1).

but, simply following their own judgement and pleasure, they were making up for themselves the laws which they were to observe and were gathering various groups of people together in different places. When finally our order was published that they should betake themselves to the practices of the ancients, many were subjected to danger, many too were struck down. Very many, however, persisted in their determination and we saw that these same people were neither offering worship and due religious observance to the gods nor practising the worship of the god of the Christians. Bearing in mind therefore our own most gentle clemency and our perpetual habit of showing indulgent pardon to all men, we have taken the view that in the case of these people too we should extend our speediest indulgence, so that once more they may be Christians and put together their meeting-places [*conventicula sua componant*], provided they do nothing to disturb good order. We are moreover about to indicate in another letter to governors what conditions they ought to observe. Consequently, in accordance with this indulgence of ours, it will be their duty to pray to their god for our safety and for that of the state and themselves, so that from every side the state may be kept unharmed and they may be able to live free of care in their own homes.

(Lact. *DMP* 34, tr. J. L. Creed)[163]

These dying words of Galerius underline clearly the theological thinking on which the persecution has been based and the civic duties inextricably associated in this thinking with traditional religion – along with a somewhat reluctant acknowledgement of the existence of the Christians' god and of the failure of the programme of persecution of that god's followers. The grudging tone is clear – nothing is said about the restoration of confiscated church properties.[164] But the unequivocal legitimization of the practice of Christianity by the senior Augustus is a landmark. Henceforth from the Balkans and the Danubian provinces westwards the Roman empire was released from persecution of Christians.

Here it would be well to pause and consider some of the implications of Eusebius' invaluable *Martyrs of Palestine*, his account of the Christian heroes of just one province up to this date of 311. The bald statistics first. There are cited ninety-one victims in Palestine itself over the years 303–11, thirteen of whom were condemned in 303–5 before the abdication of Diocletian,[165] and forty-four altogether in the last year (310/11) of the persecution under the military *dux* at the Phaeno mines. That leaves thirty-four deaths recorded

[163] Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.17.3ff. provides a Greek version for provincials, along with the preamble.

[164] The clause *ut . . . conventicula sua componant* should allow the construction of new meeting-places (and Eusebius' Greek version so understood).

[165] This tally of thirteen includes Thecla (whose ultimate fate is nowhere described *Mart. Pal.*(L) 3.1), and two Egyptians among the six young men who volunteered themselves (*Mart. Pal.*(L) 3.4). Agapius, condemned in the second year of the persecution (3.4), was not fed to the beasts – and ultimately drowned – until the fourth year (6). I have excluded Romanos, deacon and exorcist of Caesarea (Pal.), but executed at Antioch (2).

over the years 306–10 (including the year's respite 308/9).[166] If one subtracts from the total of ninety-one the forty-four victims from the mines in 310–11, the remainder is forty-seven and of these Eusebius' narrative reveals that some thirty-one either provocatively drew attention to themselves or volunteered themselves outright to the authorities. The authorities cannot be said to have been over-officious in seeking out the remaining sixteen. Even so Palestinian Christians may have been unlucky in their governors: Urbanus and then (even worse) Firmilianus are luridly depicted as virulent in their eager pursuit and punishment of Christians and it must be significant that Eusebius can report (after the last martyrdom at Caesarea on 7 March 310) that 'affairs had taken a quieter and more peaceful turn' in the province until the edict of toleration of Galerius became known (*Mart. Pal.*(S) 13.1), that would have coincided with the departure of Firmilianus. In addition Palestine was the recipient of many confessors from Egypt, sent to labour in the mines and quarries of Palestine:[167] these certainly helped to swell unusually the numbers of the victims put to death in Palestine, especially in the massacre of the confessors in the Phaeno mines (some two-thirds of the thirty-nine unnamed victims are more likely than not actually to have been Egyptian). That consideration would reduce the total of strictly Palestinian numbers by some twenty-six to (approximately) sixty-five over a total of some eight years, an average of eight martyrs per year. (Even so this latter computation still includes ten Egyptians martyred in earlier years in Palestine.)

That constitutes our best statistical guide to actual deaths in one province as some sort of model for elsewhere in the east. But other governors may have been even more vigorous in their pursuit of Christians[168] – and the presence of the imperial court, whenever it progressed, undoubtedly stimulated action in its immediate environment. And there is one important *caveat* to make on Eusebius' own figures. He is not necessarily giving the full tally but recording for posterity those with whom he was personally conversant:[169]

[166] This total is reached excluding Aedesius, a Palestinian executed in Egypt under Hierocles, *Mart. Pal.* 5.2f. It includes the Marcionite bishop Asclepius, *Mart. Pal.* 10.3.

[167] *Mart. Pal.* 8.1 (S and L) reports 97 Egyptians plus women and children sent to work in the copper mines of Palestine; *Mart. Pal.* 8.13 has a second batch of 130 Egyptians (some being sent on to Cilicia); *Mart. Pal.* 9.10 reports that 3 Egyptians (among other confessors) were seized and martyred; *Mart. Pal.* 11.6ff. records a further 5 Egyptian martyrs; *Mart. Pal.*(L) 13.1ff. reports that of the approximately 150 confessors in the mines of Phaeno in 410/11 over 100 were Egyptians (with Egyptian bishops Peleus and Nilus along with Patermuthius and Elijah, singled out for martyrdom). *Mart. Pal.*(L) 13.10 notes concerning the 39 unnamed martyrs executed at Phaeno on 4 May 311 that 'many of these were Egyptians'.

[168] Note, for example, the notorious Sossianus Hierocles (*PLRE* 1.432) in Bithynia (e.g. Lact. *DMP* 16.4) as well as in Egypt (e.g. Eus. *Mart. Pal.*(L) 5.3); likewise Clodius Culcianus (*PLRE* 1.233f.) in Egypt (e.g. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.11.4; *Mart. Pal.* 5.2; *Acta Phileae et Philoromi*).

[169] *Mart. Pal.*(S) 5.1 reveals Eusebius inserting briefly the account of the death of Ulpianus (at Tyre) not known to him personally, when the earlier (and longer) version was composed.

It is meet, then, that the conflicts which were illustrious in various districts should be committed to writing by those who dwelt with the combatants in their districts. But for me, I pray that I may be able to speak of those with whom I was personally conversant, and that they may associate me with them – those in whom the whole people of Palestine glories, because even in the midst of our land, the Saviour of all men arose like a thirst-quenching spring. The contests, then, of those illustrious champions I shall relate for the general instruction and profit.

(*Mart. Pal.*(L) *pr*. 8; cf. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.13.7)

Indeed, the narrative at various points casually discloses unnamed (and unnumbered) companions of confessors and martyrs (presumably not personally known to Eusebius), for example, *Mart. Pal.*(L) 1.1 (companions of Procopius, sent from Scythopolis to Caesarea), *Mart. Pal.*(L) 3.3 ('Agapius and his companions'), *Mart. Pal.*(L) 7.1 (unnamed confessors on trial, approached by Theodosia of Tyre), *Mart. Pal.*(L) 8.4 (unnamed Christians from Gaza and their companions, mutilated) etc. We cannot, therefore, be in any way certain that even for Palestine we have fully reliable statistics as some yardstick. Yet even these brute statistics go nowhere in reflecting the human suffering of confessors, enduring long years detained in the vile conditions of Roman prisons, the irregular bouts of gruesome tortures, young girls sent to brothels, the systematic maiming of batches of men, women and children condemned to the notorious drudgery and danger of Roman mines, some young men castrated, most others with one leg hamstrung and one eye gouged out and cauterized with branding irons – not to mention the mental anguish both of those who had succumbed to apostasy as well as of those who contrived to continue to escape detection. The Great Persecution amounts to more than the simple tally of the martyred dead.[170]

Eusebius reports that peace for Christians in the territory of Maximinus (now significantly enhanced to include the diocese of Asiana and Pontica) held for less than six full months (*Hist. Eccl.* IX.2.1). In his later *apologia* (December 312), Maximinus claims that he 'gave orders to each of the judges that none of them in future was to deal harshly with the provincials' (*ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.9a.2) but the orders that he did issue *via* his praetorian prefect Sabinus (*ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.1.3ff.) failed, crucially, to allow Christians specifically rights of assembly (and of rebuilding churches) and customary ritual action (as the palinode of Galerius had importantly legitimated). The first breakdown of formal peace came with orders forbidding Christians to

[170] Numbers in Egypt and the Thebaid may well have been grossly higher than in Eusebius' Palestine, Culcianus being credited by Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.11.4 with 'thousands' (μυρίοι) of deaths, and executions in the Thebaid being reckoned (with suspicious allusion to the parable of the sower) in tens, twenties and sometimes in thirties, sixties and a hundred in a day, Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.9.3. Such rounded figures defy precision. The population of the village in Phrygia – where all the inhabitants, as Christians, were burnt to death – cannot be quantified, Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VIII.11.1, Lact. *Div. Inst*. V.11.10.

assemble in their cemeteries (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.2.1: autumn 311) and was soon followed by a concerted attack on prominent church figures (e.g. Peter of Alexandria, beheaded 26 November 311 and 'many others of the Egyptian bishops', Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.6.2; cf. VII.32.31; VIII.13.7; Lucian of Antioch, executed in Nicomedia, 7 January 312, Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.6.3; cf. VIII.13.2), whilst Lactantius claims that Maximinus rather ordered confessors to have 'their eyes gouged out, their hands cut off, their feet amputated, their noses or ears severed' (*DMP* 36.7).

Meantime cities throughout the east were encouraged (so our sources declare, Lact. *DMP* 36.3; Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.2.1; IX.4.1f.) to petition the emperor for special permission (and rewards) for expelling Christians from their territory, a process Maximinus defends in his *apologia* (*ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.9a.6). Before long, bronze tablets recording these petitions along with the imperial reply were being loyally set up on display throughout the eastern cities – revealing the strength of polytheistic piety (and/or political opportunism) among the urban élites (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.7.1): Antioch (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.2.1); Nicomedia (*ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.9a.6: initially declined on the grounds of the number of Christians dwelling there, *ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.9a.4); Arycanda in Lycia (a result of the petition of the province of Lycia and Pamphylia), *TAM* II.3.785 = *I. Aryk.* 12; Colbasa in Pisidia (6 April, 312);[171] Eusebius quotes the text for the city of Tyre (clearly a standardized one), *Hist. Eccl.* IX.7.3ff. This threat of permanent exclusion of Christians from their home cities (where they would be well known) had the potential to affect more deeply Christians' lives than many of the previous measures (which their survival clearly shows could be successfully negotiated one way or another); cf. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.7.15. This process was accompanied by a positive encouragement of polytheistic cults and priesthoods (Lact. *DMP* 36.4f.; Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.4.2) along with a sustained propaganda warfare against Christianity (imperial distribution of copies of the scandalous *Acts of Pilate* and of the (false) accounts by prostitutes of Damascus of Christian orgies: Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.5.1f.).

Some of the words of Maximinus' response to these petitions are worth quoting as a remarkable theological statement of pagan piety:

> For all these evils [= war, plague, tempest, earthquake], and evils even more terrible, have happened many a time before this, as everyone knows. And all these things happened at once because of the baneful error and vain folly of those unhallowed men [= Christians] when that error took possession of their souls, and, one might almost say, oppressed the whole world everywhere with its deeds of shame . . . Let them behold in the broad plains the crops already ripe with waving ears of corn, the meadows, thanks to opportune rains, brilliant with plants and flowers, and the weather that has been granted us temperate and very mild; further, let

[171] Mitchell, 'Maximinus'.

all rejoice since through our piety, through the sacrifices and veneration we have rendered, the most powerful and intractable air has been propitiated, and let them take pleasure in that they therefore enjoy the most serene peace securely and in quiet. And let as many as have been wholly rescued from that blind folly and error and returned to a right and goodly frame of mind rejoice indeed the more, as if they were delivered from an unexpected hurricane or severe illness and were reaping life's sweet enjoyment for the future. But if they persist in their accursed folly, let them be separated and driven far away from your city and neighbourhood, even as you requested; that so, in accordance with your praiseworthy zeal in this respect, your city may be separated from all pollution and impiety, and, following its natural desire, may respond with due reverence to the worship of the immortal gods.

(*ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.7.9ff., tr. J. E. L. Oulton)

Ironically, this response, delivered to Tyre in summer 312(?), was accompanied by a year marked by drought, famine, plague and then war (in Armenia, where there were many Christians, Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.8.1ff.). And by autumn of that year, after Constantine's defeat of Maxentius (28 October), Maximinus was informed of 'a most perfect law in the fullest terms on behalf of the Christians' drawn up by Constantine and Licinius (so Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.9.12; cf. IX.9a.12 ('edicts and laws'); Lact. *DMP* 37.1, 44.11f.). Maximinus, in false compliance, issued via his praetorian prefect to his governors in late 312 an apologetic account of his previous treatment of Christians, reiterating his (claimed) toleration of Christians ('if some desire to follow their own worship, you should leave it in their own power', *ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.9a.1ff.). But, again, he crucially failed to specify for Christians rights of assembly and practice of customary rituals and permission to erect church-buildings (cf. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.9a.11). But the end was near, and in the spring campaign the following year (313) between Licinius and Maximinus, defeat shook Maximinus' faith in his pagan gods. 'Less than a whole year after the ordinances against the Christians' were set up on the bronze tablets in the eastern cities (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.10.12), Maximinus felt constrained at last to issue a law unequivocally restoring full freedom to Christians, along with restoration of property:[172]

That, therefore, for the future all suspicion or doubt arising from fear may be removed, we have decreed that this ordinance (*diatagma*) be published, so that it may be plain to all that those who desire to follow this sect and religious observance [i.e. Christianity] are permitted, in accordance with this our bounty, as each one wishes or finds it pleasing, to join in that religious observance which from choice he was wont to practise. And permission has also been granted them to build the Lord's houses. Nevertheless, that our bounty may be even greater, we have decided to decree this also: that if any houses or lands, which used formerly

[172] Issued in May 313 (after the defeat at Adrianople, 30 April, Lact. *DMP* 46.8f., as Eusebius believed, *Hist. Eccl.* IX.10.3); or should it be dated to earlier in spring 313?

to belong by right to the Christians, have by the injunction of our parents passed into the right of the public treasury or have been seized by any city – whether a sale of these has taken place, or they have been handed over to anyone as a gift – we have given orders that all these be restored to the Christians as their original right, so that in this also all may perceive our piety and solicitude.

(Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.10.10f., tr. J. E. L. Oulton)

But it was, in a sense, too late. When the victorious Licinius entered Nicomedia in June 313 he brought with him letters for the governors of the eastern provinces, the terms of which had been drawn up in the meeting held at Milan between Constantine and Licinius the preceding winter (February 313, Lact. *DMP* 45.1, 48.2); these terms will reflect the ordinances already applying in the west (including state compensation for any who may suffer by the restoration of church properties, previously confiscated). As this constitutes a major statement of the Constantinian (and Licinian?) view (at the time) of the place of Christianity within the empire, it deserves to be quoted in full.[173]

When I, Constantine Augustus, and I, Licinius Augustus, happily met at Milan and had under consideration all matters which concerned the public advantage and safety, we thought that, among all the other things that we saw would benefit the majority of men, the arrangements which above all needed to be made were those which ensured reverence for the Divinity, so that we might grant both to Christians and to all men freedom to follow whatever religion each one wished, in order that whatever divinity there is in the seat of heaven may be appeased and made propitious towards us and towards all who have been set under our power. We thought therefore that in accordance with salutary and most correct reasoning we ought to follow the policy of regarding this opportunity as one not to be denied to anyone at all, whether he wished to give his mind to the observances of the Christians or to that religion which he felt was most fitting to himself, so that the supreme Divinity, whose religion we obey with free minds, may be able to show in all matters His accustomed favour and benevolence towards us. For this reason we wish your Devotedness to know that we have resolved that, all the conditions which were contained in letters previously sent to your office about the Christian name being completely set aside, those measures should be repealed which seemed utterly inauspicious and foreign to our clemency, and that each individual one of those who share this same wish to observe the religion of the Christians should freely and straightforwardly hasten to do so without any anxiety or interference. We thought that this should be very fully communicated to your Solicitude, so that you should know that we have given a free and absolute permission to these same Christians to practise their religion. And when you perceive that this indulgence has been accorded by us to these people, your Devotedness understands that others too have been granted a similarly open and free permission to follow their own

[173] The addressee is a provincial governor. There is a Greek version (with minor variations) quoted by Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* X.5.2ff., no doubt the version promulgated in Caesarea (Pal.). Constantine was later to retreat from the principle, here enunciated, of religious freedom: see Barnes, *CE* 245ff.

religion and worship as befits the peacefulness of our times, so that each man may have a free opportunity to engage in whatever worship he has chosen. This we have done to ensure that no cult or religion may seem to have been impaired by us.

We have also decided that we should decree as follows about the Christians as a body: if, during the period that has passed, any appear to have purchased either from our treasury or from anyone else those places in which the Christians had previously been accustomed to assemble, and about which before now a definite rule had been laid down in the letters that were sent to your office, they should now restore these same places to the Christians without receiving any money for them or making any request for payment, and without any question of obstruction or equivocation, those who received such places as a gift should return them in the same way but the more speedily to these same Christians; both those who bought them and those who received them as gifts should, if they seek something from our benevolence, make a request of the deputy for their interests to be consulted by our clemency. All these places must forthwith be handed over to the body of the Christians through your intervention and without any delay.

And since these same Christians are known to have possessed not only the places in which they had the habit of assembling but other property too which belongs by right to their body – that is, to the churches not to individuals – you will order all this property, in accordance with the law which we have explained above, to be given back without any equivocation or dispute at all to these same Christians, that is to their body and assemblies, preserving always the principle stated above, that those who restore this same property as we have enjoined without receiving a price for it may hope to secure indemnity from our benevolence. In all these matters you will be bound to offer the aforesaid body of Christians your most effective support so that our instructions can be the more rapidly carried out and the interests of public tranquillity thereby served in this matter too by our clemency. In this way it will come about, as we have explained above, that the divine favour towards us, which we have experienced in such important matters, will continue for all time to prosper our achievements along with the public well-being. Furthermore, so that the character of this ordinance and of our benevolence can be brought to the knowledge of all, it will be desirable for you to publish this document everywhere above a proclamation of your own, and to convey it to the attention of everyone, so that the ordaining of this benevolence of ours cannot remain hidden.

(Lact. *DMP* 48.2ff., tr. J. L. Creed)

When this was posted in Nicomedia on 13 June 313, ten years of persecution effectively came to an end. This letter not unskilfully negotiates the tensions between, on the one hand, individual civil rights ('freedom of worship') and, on the other, traditional civic duties (the obligation to cultivate the divine power for the benefit of the state), a tension which underlay throughout the preceding century the clash between polytheistic state authorities supported by many of the civic-minded élite, and monotheistic Christian individuals. That tension now seemed to be resolved – for the moment. But for the future, an unresolvable factor remained – the exclusivity of Christianity.

But the shared theological viewpoint of the victorious Constantine and of the defeated Maximinus also hardly needs emphasizing: for both, divine power manifested itself in the daily events of history, and the potency, favour or disfavour of their divine champion could be read directly and unambiguously from those events. And in the aftermath the victorious side appears to have behaved no differently from what we could have anticipated from Maximinus. There was a purge of potential political and dynastic rivals and of Maximinus' close followers – and former persecutors (religion and politics being, characteristically, inseparable), victims including the notorious persecutors Culcianus (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.11.4) and Firmilianus (Eus. *Mart. Pal.*(S) 11.31), the widows of the persecutors Galerius and Diocletian (Lact. *DMP* 50f.), the wife of Maximinus (drowned in the same river Orontes into which she had ordered Christian women to be thrown: Lact. *DMP* 50.6), the pagan prophet Theotecnus of Antioch and his associates (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* IX.2f., IX.11.5f.; *Praep. Ev.* IV.2.10f.), even, it would appear, down to the priest of Apollo responsible for the oracle that had ultimately swayed Diocletian to initiate persecution (Eus. *Praep. Ev.* IV.2.11). And, correspondingly, rewards, privileges and favours began to be bestowed liberally on the ministers of the godhead responsible for the benefits of victory – just as Maximinus himself might well have done in different circumstances.

Now established in the east, Licinius was no rabid polytheist – but he was far from being a militant Christian either. It would appear that in his uneasy attempts over the succeeding years to compromise between contradictory pressures in religious policy he fatally yielded sufficient ground to allow himself credibly to be represented as an opponent of Christianity whose liberation from fear and intimidation Constantine could champion. Eventually (in suspicion of Christian disloyalty?) he purged his palace of Christians, and 'the soldiers in the cities' (= imperial civil service) were to forfeit rank if they persisted as Christians (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* X.8.10; *VC* 1.52, 1.54; cf. 11.20, 11.33). Later, 'in the final stage of his madness' (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* X.8.14) he provocatively harassed bishops, restricting visits to fellow bishops and forbidding synods and councils of bishops to convene (Eus. *Vit. Const.* 1.51) and requiring congregational meetings to be held outdoors, outside the city gates (1.53); Christian women were to receive instruction from women only and were to worship separately from men (Eus. *Vit. Const.* 1.53) and Licinius cancelled exemption from liturgies and tax privileges (granted to Christian clerics) (11.20, 11.30). If this series of harassing measures was not enough, one provincial governor went so far as to put to death the bishop of Amaseia and punished other Pontic bishops, destroying or closing churches there (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* X.8.14ff.; *Vit. Const.* 11.1f.). Whatever may have been the governor's motivation ('some of the bishops were plied with penalties

suitable for malefactors', Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* x.8.17 – were they suspected of treasonable disloyalty?), all these actions certainly provided Constantine with adequate propaganda grounds to launch a holy crusade (in 324) to liberate Christians from what could be represented as an immediate threat of widespread pagan persecution under Licinius (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* x.8.18f.; *Vit. Const.* II.2).

With victory won over Licinius, the victory of Christianity now seemed complete.

VII. CHRISTIAN LITERATURE OF THE THIRD CENTURY

The *realia* of third-century Christian life are largely lost to us, destroyed along with the church-buildings razed everywhere during the Great Persecution. So we are denied what we might have been able to read, for example, from the nature and appearance of Christian building complexes, cemeterial structures and *martyria*, along with their decorative schemes and symbols, from baptisteries and the use of liturgical spaces, from episcopal *cathedrae*, presbyteral seating and liturgical vessels and vestments – all that is gone, as are, by and large, all the sacred texts and lectionaries. It remains highly doubtful, for example, that a third-century dating can be archaeologically established with security for any Christian remains in Rome under (say) S. Clemente on the Esquiline and SS. Giovanni e Paolo on the Aventine, let alone S. Martino ai Monti on the Oppian and S. Crisogono in Trastevere. Similar scepticism applies also to the claims for third-century Christian sub-structures at Parentium (Poreč) and at Aquileia. Though we can be sure that church-houses and Christian meeting-halls will have varied greatly in size, arrangements and sophistication according to region and location, we are virtually totally dependent on literary sources and documentary texts for any description of their whereabouts and appointments. The one great exception is the chance survival of the church-house at Dura Europus (restricted in size and unelaborately decorated), buried during the siege-works of the 250s. Notable exceptions to these general observations on the survival of the material culture of third-century Christianity do include some foundation deposits in later buildings, e.g. under S. Sebastiano, and the papal crypt in Rome (in the catacomb of Callistus) – both sites relatively modest in pretensions – and some other early Roman catacomb areas (e.g. the Capella Graeca in the catacomb of Priscilla – though the precise dating is much disputed)), the *aedicula* under St Peter's (again, certainly no grandiose affair); and the Christos-Helios mosaic and other mosaics in Mausoleum M in the necropolis under St Peter's (which must at least antedate, but most likely not by much, the construction of the Constantinian basilica). Inscriptions, too, are

extremely rare, with Phrygia providing the outstanding, and largely rural, exceptions.[174]

But what does survive, in compensation, is a remarkable body of literature – far from all that was composed, however[175] – that illuminates the intellectual and spiritual lives of third-century Christians. We need to bear in mind, of course, that this is a product of the literate élite (inevitably a low percentage of the total community): there is the further difficulty of discerning how far the writers, whom we do still have represented, may have been isolated within their own Christian circles.

One category of writing continues on from the second century and can be construed as a process of self-definition as Christians endeavour to delineate their own particular identity with all its attendant ambiguities – they wish to be part of their Graeco-Roman society but at the same time to be distinguished from it, they wish to inherit as part of their patrimony the Jewish Old Testament but at the same time distinguish themselves from their Jewish brethren with whom they share these same texts and this same past in common, they wish to define their ('orthodox') doctrine and practice in opposition to a myriad Christian variations represented as breakaway sects and deviant heresies – with most of whom they share at the same time a great deal in common.

Hence the industry of apologetic writings, well represented across the century in the Latin west by the writings of Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Cyprian, Arnobius, Lactantius and in the east by the great work of Origen's *contra Celsum*. These writings show an increasing tendency to represent Christians morally as ideal members of Graeco-Roman society, attaining in practice the philosophically approved virtues to which pagans merely aspire in theory and whilst they uniformly reject crude polytheistic idolatry, they assert a theological monotheism with which, philosophically, many non-Christians might have much sympathy. But it nevertheless remains unclear how far these works merely satisfied the sense of self of a Christian readership – or reached beyond, to a non-Christian audience.[176] It may be significant that in the Greek east, where Christianity appears as the century progresses increasingly more established as an accepted constituent of society, no urgent need was felt to pen this particular category of literature beyond mid-century until Methodius responded

[174] The exiguous evidence is surveyed by Snyder (1985), overgenerous in its chronological inclusions. For the documentary, literary and archaeological evidence for pre-Constantinian church-building (with full bibliographical references), see White (1990–7). For the material under St Peter's, Toynbee and Ward-Perkins (1956) is still fundamental. On the survival of early Christian texts, see Roberts (1979), and on the inscriptions from Phrygia, see Tabbernee (1997).

[175] The swift survey below largely neglects lost writings (and survival is very haphazard, often reflecting later preoccupations), so some distortion is inevitable. The terminus adopted is, roughly, the period of the Great Persecution.

[176] See Gamble (1995) and Edwards, Goodman and Price (1999).

specifically to the polemic of Porphyry (now lost)[177] and Eusebius of Caesarea to that of Hierocles as well as that of Porphyry (in several voluminous works).

This apologetic endeavour can also be viewed as part of a wider movement towards the cultural accommodation of Christianity to its Graeco-Roman setting away from its semitic origins, reformulating and representing Christianity in hellenic terms and in acceptable Graeco-Roman rhetorical discourse, a process vital for the long-term survival of Christianity in its adopted setting. The Christian literary output of the third century ought to be regarded, therefore, not so much as separable from the mainstream of the contemporary Graeco-Roman rhetorical culture but rather as a significant constituent of that third-century culture, itself in the process of transformation.

Another carry-forward from the second century is the *adversus Iudaeos* genre – again somewhat more represented in the west by works of Hippolytus, Tertullian, Novatian and Anon. *adversus Iudaeos* though there is also much on the theme in the *contra Celsum*, in the *Didascalia Apostolorum* and in Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica*. It is possible that in the east Judaism in many places in the diaspora felt more comfortably integrated in its social setting – and hence may have been perceived by Christians less as a dramatic threat. Even so, there is a manifest urge to establish a separable identity for Christianity and to lay claims to the inheritance of the biblical past. And certainly in both regions the output in the *adversus Haereses* genre showed no diminution whether in compendium form (e.g. Hippolytus and later, Victorinus of Pettau) or, most voluminously, against individual leaders, doctrines and sects, whether in specific treatises (Tertullian being particularly prolific here) or in a veritable flurry of epistolary exchanges and conciliar debates and resolutions. Not all is attack, however: sometimes it is defence, as in the case of Dionysius of Alexandria's 'Refutation and Apology' or the 'Apology for Origen' by Pamphilus and Eusebius. It is worth remembering that such polemic and controversy was indeed frequently the vehicle for arriving at dogmatic definition (we are dealing with a religion in which [right] *belief* is a crucial feature) and that this activity would seem to have been (to judge by the literary output) much more an obsession with Christian writers at least than ever was martyrdom and persecution.[178] The chance survival of Origen's *Discussion with Heracleides* provides us with a particularly illuminating and lively vignette of this characteristic preoccupation of the third-century church.

To be sure, the potential threat of persecution, under which Christians lived their third-century lives, clearly waxed and waned, given the record of

[177] Jerome, *de Viris Illustr*. 83.

[178] Almost all writers of the third century in one mode or another were engaged in this activity of doctrinal controversy, whether directly or indirectly.

what we can reconstruct of events but it is difficult for us to assess in what way such a threat (erratic or not) may have psychologically impinged on Christians' daily consciousness. Here and there, particularly after the 250s, there would be surviving confessors – especially enrolled among the clergy – to remind communities visibly of the stark realities of persecution. Certainly we can trace the output of protreptic literature 'On Martyrdom' to periods of actual or perceived persecution (indeed they are often our major source of information), notably Tertullian at the beginning of the century, Origen in the 230s (Maximinus Thrax), Cyprian and Dionysius of Alexandria (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.46.2) in the 250s, and Phileas of Thmuis at the time of the Great Persecution. But the supreme spiritual valuation placed on confession and martyrdom – even if the theology of martyrdom scarcely progressed from what was already set in the second century – produced other forms of popular literature. Accounts of heroic martyr-*acta*, some much closer to the forensic protocols than others, circulated widely – in this Africa is peculiarly productive. Whilst there are non-Christian predecessors to this genre,[179] much stimulus was gained by the self-awareness of the confessors themselves, alert to the fact that they would be remembered liturgically on their anniversaries and that their inspired dreams, words and deeds would be popularly recalled as models of Christian heroism year after year. And it is also out of Africa that we gain our first Christian biography – stimulated precisely because the subject was (as the work proudly proclaims) the protoepiscopal martyr of Africa, Cyprian of Carthage (Pontius, 'Life of Cyprian'). Soon this genre will spawn fourth-century narratives of ascetic lives, the mirror-image of third-century martyrs' lives. A sub-set of this literary category of martyrdom would be Eusebius' *Martyrs of Palestine* – and even perhaps Lactantius' tractate *On the Deaths of Persecutors*, reviving an old apologetic theme. Persecution may well have loomed larger in the mind than the historical phenomena may seem to have warranted, but this literature should nevertheless be read against a background of many other activities.

The composition of liturgical handbooks and church orders, as well as of church prayers and hymnodies,[180] represented for us by Hippolytus' *Apostolic Tradition* in the west and the *Didascalia Apostolorum* in the east, reveals deep concern for liturgical ceremonies to be conducted not only with decorum and propriety but also according to approved procedures and regulations and for the orderly appointment, behaviour and comportment of congregations and their clergy in its various grades of offices and duties.

[179] Musurillo (1954), and for a collection of Christian texts, Musurillo (1972).

[180] For example bishop Nepos in Egypt (*ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.24.4); Harmonius in Edessa (Soz. *HE* III.16); Paul of Samosata at Antioch (*ap*. Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.30.10); Christian hymn with musical notation (*P. Oxy.* XV.1786, end of third century); Thecla's hymn in *Logos* 2 of the *Symposium* of Methodius of Olympus (Musurillo (1958) and Debidour and Musurillo (1963)).

The *Didascalia* also shows concern for dealing appropriately with sinners in various categories as well as with the indigent, the widowed and the orphaned. These are not productions characteristic of a beleaguered church in crisis panicked before persecuting demons. Neither are all those tracts and homilies directed towards the moral life and spiritual guidance of Christians which occupied so much of the penmanship of Tertullian and Cyprian (exemplifying the strong pastoral bent of western churchmanship) and of which we also have examples from Hippolytus, Novatian and Origen and have lost those of Dionysius and Pierius of Alexandria. In all their pages of exhortations, it is worth noting, we do not find injunctions to go out and preach to the heathen: this is no church driven by a missionary imperative to incorporate those outside, rather by the urge to build up the moral probity and spiritual development of the Christian gathering.

What clearly preoccupies much scholarly endeavour in the third century is the canon of the sacred text – the establishment of the text itself, the proper methodological approaches for its exegesis (allegorical, typological, literal), with much theologizing increasingly done by way of biblical commentary and homily. In all these endeavours Origen is, of course, the outstanding and prodigiously productive exponent followed by Lucian and Dorotheus, both of Antioch, Hesychius (of Alexandria?) and Pamphilus of Caesarea. Dionysius and Pierius, both of Alexandria, along with Methodius of Olympus also contributed to the genre of biblical commentary – as did Hippolytus, Victorinus of Pettau and Reticius of Autun in the west. All this activity indicates the increasing sophistication of ecclesiastical scholarship for which we have a valuable description in Origen's method of instruction in Gregory Thaumaturgus' *Panegyric to Origen* (VII. 93ff.).[181] Eusebius' *Onomasticon*, a gazeteer on the place-names in Scripture, is another important by-product of this biblical scholarship. These works should be seen in combination with the output of dogmatic writings as evidence for the strenuous intellectual life in the élite levels of the third-century churches, writings such as Origen's pioneering *De Principiis*, Theognostus' *Hypotyposeis* (Photius, *Bibl.* 106.86bf.), Methodius' treatises, the literature generated by those involved in the trinitarian dispute with Paul of Samosata, for example Malchion of Antioch (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.29.2; Jerome, *de Viris Illustr.* 71), the (largely lost) doctrinal works of Peter of Alexandria and, in the west, Novatian's *De Trinitate* and to some extent Lactantius' *Divinae Institutiones*. Christianity has succeeded in attracting the energies of some of the great scholarly and cultivated minds of the third-century Graeco-Roman world, with Alexandria in particular and then Caesarea in Palestine emerging as premier centres of Christian learning as well as of speculative theology – and destined to bequeath a legacy of controversy and rancour.

[181] Crouzel (1969).

And following on from the endeavour of the second-century Christian apologists to lay claim to a distant past anterior to that of the Greeks ('Plato as Atticized Moses'), Sextus Julius Africanus importantly attempted to synchronize biblical, Jewish, hellenistic and Christian events (down to 221) in his *Chronographiai*. Likewise Hippolytus composed a *Chronicle* of world history from the creation down to the year of its composition (234). These attempts at creating a Universal History we see further advanced in Eusebius' early work, his *Chronography* and *Chronological Canons*, correlating sacred and profane history: Christians can now firmly place themselves within new historical horizons in an ancient and venerable religious tradition, linked to a far distant past.[182] The culmination of this line of inquiry is Eusebius' *Church History*, the earliest version of which may have been composed even before the outbreak of the Great Persecution (i.e. books I to VII).[183] For all its shortcomings it is a remarkable achievement, in essence compiling documentary evidence on a path-breaking new historical theme bearing witness to a now mature Christian self-consciousness.

Finally we must recall that so much ecclesiastical life was conducted around the Mediterranean by means of correspondence, whether by routine letters of communion (and excommunication) and by letters of recognition, by encyclical reports of synods and councils, by the exchange of ideas (and disagreements), by (at least in the case of Alexandria) regular festal letters announcing the date of Easter. Here we have lost so much. For example, Eusebius was able to compile a collection of over a hundred letters by Origen (*Hist. Eccl.* VI.36.3): we have extant but two, one to Gregory Thaumaturgus, one to Julius Africanus. But of Gregory's own correspondence (cf. Jerome, *de Viris Illustr.* 65) we have only the 'Canonical Epistle' and of Julius Africanus' correspondence we have but two examples (one of which is fragmentary). Thanks to Eusebius' *Church History*, books VI and VII, we have preserved most (but not entirely all) of what we have remaining of the great epistolary output of Dionysius of Alexandria (all in fragments except for one brief letter). Thereafter, for example, we have scraps only of all of the papal correspondence throughout the century, one letter (translated) of Firmilian of Cappadocian Caesarea, three letters attributed to Novatian, one brief letter and some fragments from Peter of Alexandria[184] (plus the Letter of the four Egyptian bishops). It makes us all the more grateful to have at least the collection of over eighty documents associated with Cyprian of Carthage to remind us of what we have lost and of the vigour of church life at this level of ecclesiastical society. It is a sobering thought that our

[182] The calculations for establishing the cycle of Easter dates also continued to occasion computational research: e.g. Hippolytus (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VI.22.1); Anon. *de Pascha Computus* (CSEL III.I 248–71; Ogg (1955); Dionysius of Alexandria (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.20.1); Anatolius (Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* VII.32.13ff.).

[183] On Eusebius' works, see Barnes, *CE*.

[184] See Vivian (1988) 53ff., 139ff. On the letters of Antony, see Rubensen (1995).

view of third-century church life would be transformed were we to possess other decades illumined in the same lively light as we have for the decade 248–58 covered by the Cyprianic correspondence.

It distorts perceptions of third-century Christians to leave them in constant fear of persecuting dungeons, fire and sword. Other serious matters also preoccupied their minds and engaged their energies.

CHRONOLOGY

Emperors	The West	The East	Culture, Religion, Society
192 Death of Commodus (31 December). Pertinax proclaimed emperor			
193 Murder of Pertinax (28 March). Julianus declared emperor, but put to death on 1 June. Accession of Septimius Severus	193 Severus declares D. Clodius Albinus, governor of Britain, Caesar	193 C. Pescennius Niger proclaimed emperor by the Syrian legions	
		194 Niger is defeated on the plain of Issus (April). Severus crosses the Euphrates (*c.* September)	
	195 Albinus declared emperor in Britain. He sets up his capital in Lyon		
	197 Severus defeats Albinus near Lyon (19 February). Death of Albinus. Severus returns to Rome (June)	197–202 Severus campaigns in the east	197 Tertullian's *Apologeticum*
198 Caracalla (Caesar 196) proclaimed Augustus		198 Capture of Ctesiphon 199–201 Severus in Egypt	before 198 Papinian's *Quaestiones*
	202 Severus returns to Rome from the east and celebrates his *decennalia* 203 Consulship of C. Fulvius Plautianus and P. Septimius Geta. The lawyer Papinian is praetorian prefect 203–4 Severus in Africa 204 Secular games at Rome 205 Consulship of Caracalla and Geta. Murder of Plautianus		202 Enforcement of regulations against Christians 203 Dedication of the arch of Septimius at Rome. Origen succeeds Clement as head of the Catechetical School. The *Passio* of Perpetua and Felicitas after 204 Papinian's *Responsa* 205 Birth of Plotinus

206 First consulship of Cassius Dio
206–7 Bulla Felix active in Italy
208 Severus leaves Rome for Britain

208 Ardashir becomes king of Persia
208–213 Parthian succession disputed between Vologaeses V and Artabanus V. Artabanus is eventually confirmed as king of Parthia

209 Geta (Caesar 198) proclaimed Augustus
211 Death of Severus in York (4 February). Succeeded by Caracalla and Geta. Following the murder of Geta, Caracalla becomes sole emperor (26 December)

211 Murder of Papinian, possibly on the same day as Geta

212 Caracalla issues the *Constitutio Antoniniana*, universalizing Roman citizenship

213 Caracalla campaigns successfully against the Alamanni

214–17 Caracalla in the east, accompanied by his mother. He invades Parthia in 215, spends the winter of 215–16 at Antioch, then advances to the eastern borders of Adiabene
215 Massacre at Alexandria

215 Issue of *Antoninianus* silver coinage

217 Macrinus begins a campaign against the Parthians
217 Asassination of Caracalla near Carrhae (8 April). Macrinus becomes emperor, but is defeated in battle by supporters of Elagabalus and put to death (8 June 218)

(*cont.*)

Emperors	The West	The East	Culture, Religion, Society
218 Elagabalus proclaimed emperor at Raphaneae (16 May)		218 Macrinus agrees a dishonourable peace with Artabanus V (summer) 218–19 Elagabalus winters at Nicomedia	
	219 Elagabalus arrives in Rome (late summer) 220 Consulship of Elagabalus and Comazon		after 219 Cassius Dio completes his *History*
221 Elagabalus adopts his cousin, Alexianus, as Caesar, under the name of Marcus Aurelius Alexander (26 June)			
222 Elagabalus and his mother are murdered (13 March). His cousin succeeds him, taking the name of Severus Alexander	222 The lawyer Ulpian is *praefectus annonae*, and subsequently praetorian prefect		
	223 Murder of Ulpian		
		224 Artabanus V defeated and killed in battle by Ardashir	224 Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists* *c*. 225 Death of Tertullian *c*. 225–30 The Ludovisi battle-sarcophagus
		226 Ardashir crowned king of kings of Iran	
	229 Second consulship of Cassius Dio		
		230 Persians under Ardashir invade Mesopotamia. Nisibis besieged	
	231 Severus Alexander departs Rome for the east (spring)		
		232 Severus Alexander campaigns unsuccessfully against Ardashir	232 Origen is exiled from Alexandria, and moves to Caesarea *c*. 232 Birth of Porphyry

234 Maximinus Thrax proclaimed emperor by Pannonian soldiers

235 Death of Severus Alexander and his mother, Julia Mamaea, near Mainz, after a mutiny (18/19 March). Maximinus Thrax confirmed as emperor by the senate

235 Maximinus campaigns successfully against the Alamanni

235–8 The Persians overrun Mesopotamia

236 Maximinus declares his son, Maximus, Caesar and deifies his own wife

236–7 Campaigns against the Sarmatians and Dacians

236 Capture of Nisibis and Carrhae

238 Gordian I and his son, Gordian II, declared emperors in Africa. Their claim is recognized by the senate, but they are defeated and killed near Carthage by the legate of Numidia. The senate elects Pupienus and Balbinus emperors (late April/early May). Upon their murder by the praetorians, Gordian III is proclaimed emperor (August)

238 Maximinus besieges Aquileia. He is murdered, along with his son (early June). The Goths and Dacian Carpi attack across the Danube

238–41 M. Tullius Menophilus governor of Moesia Inferior. He negotiates successfully with the Goths and Carpi (240)

240 Rebellion at Carthage under Sabinianus crushed

c. 240–5 The Achilles sarcophagus

241 Timesitheus appointed praetorian prefect

241 Shapur I succeeds his father Ardashir on the Persian throne. He launches an offensive upon Mesopotamia

242 A campaign against the Persians is inaugurated, under Timesitheus and Gordian (spring). Gordian winters in Antioch

242 Mani begins preaching his new religion

(*cont.*)

Emperors	The West	The East	Culture, Religion, Society
		243 Roman successes against the Persians. Timesitheus falls ill and dies	
244 Philip the Arabian acknowledged as emperor (early March)	244–6 and 248–53 Goths, Carpi and their allies invade Moesia and the Balkans	244 Shapur I defeats Romans. Gordian III dies, possibly of wounds. His successor, Philip the Arabian, makes peace with the Persians and departs for Rome	
247 Philip, the emperor's son (Caesar 244) is declared Augustus (August)			247–8 Dionysius bishop of Alexandria
	248 Millenary celebrations at Rome (21 April). Decius pacifies Moesia and Pannonia		248 Origen's *Contra Celsum*. Cyprian becomes bishop of Carthage
249 Trajanus Decius is declared emperor by his troops (June)	249 Philip is killed in battle with Decius near Verona (September)	249 Usurpation of Jotapian in Syria and/or Cappadocia	late 249 Persecution of Christians
	250 Etruscus campaigns against the Goths in Illyricum	250 Attempted usurpation of Titus Julius Priscus	*c*. 250 Birth of Iamblichus
	250 or 251 Usurpation of Valens at Rome		
251 Decius names his two sons, Herennius Etruscus and Hostilianus (Caesars 250) Augusti (May). Hostilianus proclaimed emperor with Trebonianus Gallus (May/June). Hostilianus dies soon afterwards. Gallus' son, Volusianus, proclaimed Augustus	251 Defeat and death of Decius and Herennius Etruscus on the Danube at the hands of the Goths under Cniva (May)		mid-third century: sporadic recurrence of plague throughout the empire
	252 Goths and others invade the Danubian provinces	252 Tiridates III is deposed by the Persians in Armenia. Under Shapur, they then attack Mesopotamia	*c*. 254 Death of Origen

253 Aemilianus is proclaimed emperor on the Danube, but is murdered some four months later by his troops near Spoletium. In the meantime, Valerian is proclaimed emperor by the Rhine legions. The senate recognize his claim, and make his son, Gallienus, Augustus

253 First Gothic sea-borne expedition to Asia Minor. Shapur invades Syria, capturing Doura and Antioch. Usurpation of Uranius Antoninus, who repulses the Persians

254 Marcommani in Pannonia. They raid Ravenna. Alamanni in Raetia and Gaul. Gallienus marches against them

254 Shapur captures Nisibis. Goths in Thrace. Valerian departs for the east, liberates Antioch and recaptures Doura. Usurpation of Uranius Antoninus ends

255 The Borani take Pityus and Trapezus. Valerian reaches Antioch. Second Gothic sea-borne expedition to Asia Minor

256 Gallienus in Cologne. He establishes a mint

257 Renewed persecution of Christians. Cyprian of Carthage exiled to Curubis

258 Death of Valerian II on campaign in Illyricum. The usurpation of Ingenuus in Moesia and Pannonia is crushed by Gallienus

258 Odenathus of Palmyra receives consular honours

258 Martyrdoms of Cyprian and Sixtus II, bishop of Rome

259 Alamanni invade Illyricum and Gaul, and Iuthungi invade Italy

259 Dionysius I, bishop of Rome

(*cont.*)

Emperors	The West	The East	Culture, Religion, Society
260 Macrianus and Quietus declared emperors	260 The Alamanni are repulsed by Gallienus, who then opens a mint at Milan. Simplicinius Genialis, governor of Raetia, is victorious over the Iuthungi. Usurpations of Postumus in Gaul, and of Regalianus on the Danube 260–7 Gallienus campaigning in Illyricum, with only brief returns to Rome	260 Valerian is defeated at Edessa by Shapur and captured. The Persians make further inroads into the eastern provinces	260 Gallienus ends persecution of the Christians (The 'Little Peace')
261 Macrianus killed in battle against Aureolus in Illyricum. Quietus executed at Emesa by Odenathus (November)		261 Odenathus of Palmyra recognised as *dux* and *corrector totius Orientis*. Usurpation of Valens in Macedonia. He is later killed by his own troops. Usurpation of Mussius Aemilianus, prefect of Egypt, ended the following year	
	262 Gallienus in Rome (briefly) to celebrate his *decennalia* (summer)	262 Odenathus successful against the Persians. He attempts to capture Ctesiphon. Goths in Asia Minor	262 Plague reaches Italy and Africa. Dedication of the arch of Gallienus at Rome
	264 Postumus celebrates his *quinquennalia* in Gaul (July?)		
	265 Gallienus campaigns unsuccessfully against Postumus		265 or 266 Gallienus is initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries at Athens
		266 Odenathus makes a second attempt upon Ctesiphon. Goths make another maritime raid on Asia Minor	
		266 or 267 Arrest and execution of Odenathus. His wife, Zenobia, secures power in the name of their infant son, Vaballathus	

267 *Quindecennalia* of Gallienus

267 Gallienus victorious in battle at Naïssus. Aureolus throws in his lot with Postumus, and is attacked at Milan by Gallienus

267 Gothic invasion of Greece, the Balkans and the Aegean. Sack of Athens

268 Murder of Gallienus at the siege of Milan (September). He is succeeded by Claudius II, who puts down the revolt of Aureolus

268 Goths attack Macedonia

268 Paul of Samosata is declared a heretic by a synod at Antioch

268 Alamanni invade northern Italy, but are defeated by Claudius II

269 Claudius is victorious over the Goths at Naïssus, and receives the title *Gothicus Maximus*. Postumus celebrates his *decennalia*, but is assassinated shortly afterwards (May or June). He is succeeded first by Marius, then by Victorinus

269 Zenobia extends her kingdom

270 Claudius II dies at Sirmium, a victim of the plague (January). The senate choose his brother, Quintillus, as emperor, but he reigns only 77 days. Aurelian declares himself in Sirmium

270 Palmyrene troops enter Alexandria. Zenobia annexes Egypt, Syria and Asia Minor

270 Death of Plotinus

271 Victorinus takes Autun. Aurelian campaigns against the Iuthungi in Raetia and Noricum, the Vandals and Sarmatians in Pannonia. New incursions into Italy by the Alamanni and Iuthungi. Aurelian's victories at Fano and Ticinum deliver Italy. Assassination of Victorinus at Cologne. Tetricus is declared emperor in Gaul. Evacuation of Dacia and creation of a new province, Dacia Ripensis

271 Vaballathus, the son of Zenobia, is declared Augustus

271 Construction of a new defensive wall around Rome begun

(*cont.*)

Emperors	The West	The East	Culture, Religion, Society
	272 or 273 Tetricus elevates his son Tetricus	272 Aurelian moves against the Palmyrenes. He reconquers Asia Minor and Egypt. He is victorious in Syria, at Daphne and Emessa. Zenobia is captured. Death of Shapur I, who is succeeded by Hormizd I 273 Revolt of Palmyra is ruthlessly suppressed. Hormizd I dies, and is succeeded by Vahran I	
	274 Aurelian campaigns in Gaul. Tetricus submits. Aurelian celebrates a triumph at Rome		274 Inauguration of Aurelian's temple of the Sun God and creation of a priesthood to administer it. Coinage reform
275 Murder of Aurelian (late September/early October). After a brief interregnum, Tacitus is declared emperor by the senate, with the support of the army (late November/early December)	275 Alamanni invade Gaul		
276 Tacitus is murdered and replaced by Florianus, who is recognized by the senate (June/July). Simultaneously, the eastern legions declare Probus emperor. Shortly afterwards, Florianus is assassinated by his troops in Tarsus (August)		276 Probus campaigns against the Goths in Anatolia, then winters in Sirmium. Death of Vahran I, succeeded by Vahran II	
	277–8 Probus recovers Gaul 278 Battles against Vandals and Burgundians in Raetia		

279 Suppression of Isaurian rebellion in Asia Minor. Siege of Cremna. Campaign against the Blemmyes in Egypt

280 Usurpation of Bonosus and Proculus

280 Frankish piracy in the Mediterranean, including a raid on Syracuse

281 Probus celebrates a triumph in Rome, and winters there

281 Usurpation of Saturninus. He is murdered by his own soldiers at Apamea

282 Murder of Probus near Sirmium (September–October). The soldiers acclaim Carus emperor

282 Carus campaigns against the Sarmatians and the Quadi

283 Death of Carus near Ctesiphon (July/August). He is succeeded by Carinus in the west and Numerian in the east (Caesars 282)

283 Carinus campaigns against the Germans in Gaul

283 Carus and Numerian take the offensive against Vahran II in Mesopotamia. Capture of Ctesiphon and Seleucis on the Tigris. Numerian winters in Syria

283 The *Cynegetica* of Nemesianus

284 Assassination of Numerian in Thrace at the instigation of his praetorian prefect, Aper (early November). He is succeeded by Diocles (20 November), who executes Aper and takes the name of Diocletian

285 Battle of the Margus between Diocletian and Carinus (April or May). Carinus is defeated, and subsequently killed by his own troops

285 Maximian defeats the Bagaudae under Amandus and Aelianus in Gaul (late summer), then repels a German invasion of Gaul (autumn). Diocletian campaigns against the Sarmatians

(*cont.*)

Emperors	The West	The East	Culture, Religion, Society
286 Maximian (Caesar 285) declared Augustus (1 March or 1 April)	286 Carausius declares himself Augustus in Britain (autumn)	286 Diocletian winters at Nicomedia, then summers in Palestine 287 Diocletian makes an agreement with Vahran II in Syria, and restores Tiridates III as ruler of Armenia	
	288 or 289 Conference between Diocletian and Maximian, possibly on the frontier of Raetia 289 Diocletian campaigns against the Sarmatians. Maximian defeated by Carausius		
	Dec. 290 or Jan. 291 Conference in Milan between Diocletian and Maximian	290 Diocletian campaigns against the Saraceni	
293 Constantius Chlorus and Galerius appointed Caesars in the west and east respectively (1 March). The first tetrarchy	293 Constantius captures Boulogne from Carausius. Carausius is killed by his minister Allectus, who continues to hold Britain	293 Death of Vahran II. Succeeded first by Vahran III, and then Narses I 293 or 294 Galerius suppresses a revolt in Upper Egypt	293 Introduction of diocesan organization *c*. 294 Coinage reform (or before 293) 295 Edict on Marriages (1 May)
	296 Constantius recovers Britain from Allectus. Diocletian defeats the Quadi on the Danube, and campaigns against the Carpi (summer/autumn)	296 Narses invades Armenia	
	297 Maximian combats a rebellion in Africa	297 Narses defeats Galerius near Carrhae (spring). Revolt in Egypt under L. Domitius Domitianus and Achilleus	*c*. 297 Purge of Christians in the army

298 Galerius captures Ctesiphon. Diocletian suppresses the revolt in Egypt. He besieges and captures Alexandria

299 Peace treaty with Persia

301 Currency reform (before September). Diocletian's Prices Edict (December)

302 Death of Narses, succeeded by Hormizd II

302 Rescript against the Manichaeans

303 Diocletian and Maximian celebrate their *vicennalia* at Rome (20 November). Galerius campaigns against the Carpi on the Danube

303 Great Persecution of the Christians begins (23 February)

304 Death of Pope Marcellinus

305 Abdication of Diocletian and Maximian (1 May). Constantius and Galerius succeed them, and appoint Severus and Maximin Daia Caesars. The second tetrarchy

306 Death of Constantius at York (25 July). Constantine proclaimed emperor of the west by Constantius' soldiers

306 Maxentius acclaimed as princeps by the praetorians, and enlists the support of his father, Maximian

307 Constantine marries Fausta. He is recognized as Augustus by Maximian. Death of Severus

307 Maxentius and Maximian ally with Constantine. Galerius invades Italy, but subsequently withdraws to Pannonia (autumn). Severus marches on Rome. He is forced to retreat by Maxentius and Maximian, and abdicates in Ravenna (spring)

307 First issue of the *solidus*

308 Conference at Carnuntum (11 November). Maximian is forced to retire a second time, and Licinius is invested as Augustus

308 Domitius Alexander rebels against Maxentius in Africa, but is suppressed the following year

309 Death of Hormizd II

309 Maximin's edict concerning the rebuilding of temples in Palestine

(*cont.*)

Emperors	The West	The East	Culture, Religion, Society
310 Death of Maximian after a revolt in Gaul. Maximin declared Augustus by his troops			310 Pamphilus executed
			c. 310 Lactantius becomes tutor to Crispus
311 Death of Galerius			311 Galerius' Edict of Tolerance (30 April). Persecution resumed by Maximin, and Peter of Alexandria martyred (November). Miltiades bishop of Rome
311 or 312 Death of Diocletian			
	312 Constantine is victorious over Maxentius at the battle of the Milvian Bridge (28 October)		312 Maximin's rescript expelling Christians from the cities
313 Marriage of Licinius to Constantia, Constantine's sister (February). Maximin commits suicide at Tarsus (*c.* July)		313 Licinius defeats Maximin near Adrianople (30 April)	313 Edict of freedom of religious belief issued jointly by Licinius and Constantine ('Edict of Milan'). Council in Rome condemns Donatists
	314 Constantine campaigns in Germany (autumn)		314 Council of Arles finds against Donatists. Verona List compiled. Introduction of the *chrysargyron*
	315 Constantine celebrates his *decennalia* at Rome		315 Arch of Constantine
	316 Battle of Cibalae between Constantine and Licinius (8 October), followed by reconciliation		
317 Crispus, younger Constantine and younger Licinius declared Caesars (1 March)			

321 Constantine abrogates responsibility for the Donatist controversy

324 Constantine elevates Helena and Fausta to the rank of Augusta. Constantius declared Caesar

324 Constantine defeats Licinius at the battle of Chrysopolis (18 September). Licinius is banished to Salonica. Foundation of the city of Constantinople (8 November)

325 Constantine celebrates his *vicennalia* at Nicomedia.

325 Council of Nicaea

326 Deaths of Crispus, Fausta and the younger Licinius

326 Constantine's *vicennalia* celebrated in Rome

326 Holy pilgrimage of Helena

c. 327 Death of Helena

330 Dedication of the city of Constantinople (11 May)

332 Constantine campaigns against the Goths

333 Constans declared Caesar (25 December)

334 Constantine campaigns against the Sarmatians

335 Dalmatius declared Caesar

335 Dedication of the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Council of Tyre. First exile of Athanasius

336 Constantine celebrates his *tricennalia* in Constantinople (25 July)

336 Council of Constantinople. Exile of Marcellus of Ancyra

337 Death of Constantine (22 May)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABBREVIATIONS

PAPYROLOGICAL ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations of papyrological publications which are not included in the following list may be found in J. F. Oates *et al., Checklist of Editions of Greek Papyri and Ostraka*, 4th edn. Atlanta, 1992, or the web edition: John F. Oates, Roger S. Bagnall, Sarah J. Clackson, Alexandra A. O'Brien, Joshua D. Sosin, Terry G. Wilfong, and Klaas A. Worp, *Checklist of Greek, Latin, Demotic and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets*, <http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/papyrus/texts/clist.html>, Month, 200#.

AARC	*Atti dell'Academia Romanistica Costantiniana*
AAntHung	*Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*
AArchHung	*Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*
ABSA	*Annual of the British School at Athens*
AC	*L'Antiquité Classique*
ADAJ	*Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan*
AE	*L'Année épigraphique*
AJPh	*American Journal of Philology*
Annales (ESC)	*Annales (Économies, sociétés, civilisation)*
Annales (HSS)	*Annales (Histoire, Sciences sociales)*
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*
AntAfr	*Antiquités Africaines*
ARS	A. C. Johnson, P. R. Coleman-Norton and F. C. Bourne, *Ancient Roman Statutes*. Austin, TX, 1961
ASR	*Die antiken Sarkophagreliefs*, ed. C. Robert, Berlin, 1890–
AT	*L'Antiquité Tardive*
Aur. Vict. *Caes.*	Aurelius Victor, *De Caesaribus*
BAH	Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique
BAR	British Archaeological Reports
BAR Int. Ser.	British Archaeological Reports, International Series
BAR Suppl. Ser.	British Archaeological Reports, Supplementary Series
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BASP	*Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists*
BCH	*Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique*
BEFAR	Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome

BEO	*Bulletin des Études Orientales*
BGU	*Aegyptische Urkunden aus den Königlichen/Staatlichen Museum zu Berlin, Griechische Urkunden*. Berlin, 1895–
BICS	*Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*
BIDR	*Bullettino dell'Istituto di Diritto Romano*
BJ	*Bonner Jahrbücher*
BMC	*Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum*. v (Pertinax to Elagabalus). H. Mattingly, London, 1950; vi (Severus Alexander to Balbinus and Pupienus). R. A. G. Carson, London, 1962
BRGK	*Bericht der römisch-germanischen Kommission*
BSAC	*Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte*
BSFN	*Bulletin de la Société française de numismatique*
BSNAF	*Bulletin de la Société nationale des antiquaires de France*
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
Bull. Ép.	*Bulletin épigraphique* in *Revue des Études Grecques*
CAH	*Cambridge Ancient History*: vol. x^2 (1996), xi^2 (2000), xii^1 (1939), xiii (1998); xiv (2000)
Cahiers Glotz	*Cahiers du Centre G. Glotz*
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CE	*Chronique d'Égypte*
CEFR	Collection de l'École française de Rome
Chron. Min. i	T. Mommsen, *Chronica Minora* i (Monumenta Germaniae Historica Auctores Antiquissimi 9). Berlin, 1892
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*
CIMRM	*Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae*, ed. M. J. Vermaseren, The Hague, 1956–60
CIS	*Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*
CJ	*Codex Iustinianus*
CLRE	R. S. Bagnall, A. Cameron, S. R. Schwartz and K. A. Worp, *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire* (Philological Monographs of the American Philological Association 36). Atlanta, 1987
Coll.	*Mosaicarum et Romanarum Legum Collatio* (in *FIRA* ii.544–89)
Cons.	*Consultatio Veteris cuiusdam Iurisconsulti* (in *FIRA* ii.594–613)
CPh	*Classical Philology*
CQ	*Classical Quarterly*
CR	*Classical Review*
CRAI	*Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
CTh	*Codex Theodosianus*
D	*Digest*
DHA	*Dialogues d'Histoire Ancienne*
Diz. Ep.	E. de Ruggiero *et al.*, *Dizionario epigrafico di antichità romane*. Rome, 1886–
DOP	*Dumbarton Oaks Papers*
EA	*Epigraphica Anatolica*

EPRO	*Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain*, ed. M. J. Vermaseren, Leiden, 1961–
ES	*Epigraphische Studien*
ESAR	*An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*, ed. T. Frank: I, *Rome and Italy of the Republic*; II, *Roman Egypt to the Reign of Diocletian*; III, *Roman Britain, Roman Spain, Roman Sicily, La Gaule Romaine*; IV, *Roman Africa, Roman Syria, Roman Greece, Roman Asia*; V, *Rome and Italy of the Empire*. Baltimore, 1933–40
Eus. *Hist. Eccl.*	Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*
Eus. *Vit. Const.*	Eusebius, *De Vita Constantini*
Eutr.	Eutropius
Expositio	*Expositio Totius Mundi et Gentium*, ed. J. Rougé, SC 124. Paris, 1967
FD III	*Fouilles de Delphes*, III, *Épigraphie*. Paris, 1909–85
FGrH	*Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, ed. F. Jacoby
FHG	*Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, ed. K. Müller. Paris, 1878–85
FIRA	S. Riccobono *et al.*, *Fontes Iuris Romani Anteiustiniani*, 2nd edn, 3 vols. [I, *Leges*; II, *Auctores*; III, *Negotia*]. Florence, 1940–3
FV	*Fragmenta Vaticana* (in *FIRA* II.464–540)
GCN	M. E. Smallwood, *Documents Illustrating the Principates of Gaius, Claudius and Nero*. Cambridge, 1967
GCS	*Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten jahrhunderte*
GLP	D. L. Page, *Greek Literary Papyri*, vol. I (= *Select Papyri* III) (Loeb Classical Library). Cambridge, MA and London, 1942
G&R	*Greece and Rome*
GRBS	*Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*
H.	The Hatran Inscriptions: see Part V, ch. 16 n. 39
HAC^{1}	*Historia Augusta Colloquia*, original series. Bonn, 1964–91
HAC^{2}	*Historia Augusta Colloquia*, new series. Macerata, 1991, thereafter Bari, 1994–
HAW	*Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft*
Herod.	Herodian
HLL	*Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike*
HSCP	*Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*
HThR	*Harvard Theological Review*
IA	*Iranica Antiqua*
IAM	M. Euzennat, J. Marion and J. Gascou, *Inscriptions antiques du Maroc* II. Paris, 1982
I. Aryk.	S. Şahin, *Die Inschriften von Arykanda* (IGSK 48). Bonn, 1994
ICret	M. Guarducci, *Inscriptiones Creticae*, 4 vols. Rome, 1935–50
I. Cyme	*Die Inschriften von Kyme*, ed. H. Engelmann (IGSK 5). Bonn, 1976
I. Eph.	*Die Inschriften von Ephesos* (IGSK 11–17). 8 vols. in 10. Bonn, 1979–84
IG	*Inscriptiones Graecae*

IGBulg	G. Mihailov, *Inscriptiones Graecae in Bulgaria Repertae*, 5 vols. in 6. Sofia, 1958–97
IGF	J.-CL. Decourt. *Inscriptions grecques de la France (IGF)*. Lyons, 2004
IGLS	*Inscriptions Grecques et Latines de la Syrie*
IGRR	R. Cagnat *et al.*, *Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes*, 3 vols. (I, 3, 4). Paris, 1906–27
IGSK	Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien
ILAfr	R. Cagnat, A. Merlin and L. Chatelain, *Inscriptions Latines d'Afrique (Tripolitanie, Tunisie et Maroc)*. Paris, 1923
ILM	L. Chatelain, *Inscriptions Latines du Maroc*. Paris, 1942
ILS	*Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*
IME	*Inscriptions métriques de l'Égypte gréco-romaine: Recherches sur la poésie épigrammatique des grecs en Égypte*, ed. E. Bernand. Paris, 1969
IMS	F. Papazoglou *et al.*, *Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure*. Belgrade: I (Singidunum and NW area, 1976); II (Viminacium and Margum, 1986); III.2 (Timacum Minus and Timok valley, 1995); IV (Naissus–Remesiana–Horreum Margi, 1979); VI (Scupi and Kumanovo region, 1982)
InscrIt	*Inscriptiones Italiae*. Rome, 1931–
Inv. Pal.	Cantineau, J. *et al.*, *Inventaire des Inscriptions de Palmyre*. 12 fascicles: I–IX (J. Cantineau), Beirut; X (J. Starcky), Damascus; XI (J. Teixidor), Beirut; XII (A. Bounni and J. Teixidor), Damascus. (1930–75)
IRT	J. M. Reynolds and J. B. Ward-Perkins, *The Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania*. Rome, 1952
I. Smyrn.	G. Petzl, *Die Inschriften von Smyrna* (IGSK 23, 24), 2 vols. in 3. Bonn, 1982–90
It. Ant.	*Itineraria Antonini Augusti* (O. Cuntz, ed., *Itineraria Romana* I. Stuttgart, 1929 (repr. 1990))
JBAA	*Journal of the British Archaeological Association*
JAC	*Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*
JEA	*Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*
JEH	*Journal of Ecclesiastical History*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
JJP	*Journal of Juristic Papyrology*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JRA	*Journal of Roman Archaeology*
JRGZM	*Jahrbuch des römisch-germanischen Zentralmuseums, Mainz*
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*
JS	*Journal des Savants*
JSAS	*Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*
JThS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
Knopf-Krüger	R. Knopf, and G. Krüger, *Ausgewählte Martyrakten*, 4. Aufl. Tübingen, 1965

Lact. *DMP*	Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum*
LoisRom	*Les Lois des Romains: 7e édition par un groupe de romanistes des 'Textes de droit romain' tome II de Paul Frédéric Girard et Félix Senn*, ed. V. Giuffrè (Pubblicazioni della Facoltà di Giurisprudenza della Università di Camerino 12). Naples, 1977
LSCG	F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées des cités grecques* (École française d'Athènes, Travaux et mémoires 18). Paris, 1969
MAAR	*Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*
MAL	*Atti dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Memorie. Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*
MAMA	*Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua*. 10 vols. Manchester, then London, 1928–93
MBAH	*Münstersche Beiträge zur antiken Handelsgeschichte*
MEFRA	*Mélanges de l'École française de Rome: Antiquité*
MPER n.s.	Mitteilungen aus der Papyrussammlung der österreichischen Nationalbibliothek in Wien. New Series, 1932–
Münch.Beitr.	Münchener Beiträge zur Papyrusforschung und antiken Rechtsgeschichte
MUSJ	*Mélanges de l'Université St Joseph*
NC	*Numismatic Chronicle*
NDIEC	G. H. R. Horsley, R. A. Kearsley, and S. R. Llewelyn, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*: I (1981); II (1982); III (1983); IV (1987); V (1989); VI (1992); VII (1994), North Ryde, NSW; VIII (1998), Grand Rapids, MI
NZ	*Numismatische Zeitschrift*
OCD[3]	*Oxford Classical Dictionary*, eds. S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth, 3rd edn. Oxford, 1996
OGIS	W. Dittenberger, *Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae*, 2 vols. Leipzig, 1903–5
OLP	*Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica*
OR	*Opuscula Romana*
Origo	*Origo Constantini*, ed. I. König. Trier, 1987
P&P	*Past and Present*
PACT	*Physical, Chemical and Mathematical Techniques applied to Archaeology*
PAES	E. Littmann *et al.*, *Publications of the Princeton University Archaeological Expedition to Syria*. III: Greek and Latin Inscriptions. A, Southern Syria (Leiden, 1904–21); B, Northern Syria (Leiden, 1908–22); IV: Semitic Inscriptions (Leiden, 1914–49)
Pan. Lat.	*Panegyrici Latini* (cited in the numeration of Mynors' Oxford Classical Text (1964) and Nixon and Rodgers, *Panegyrici*)
PBSR	*Papers of the British School at Rome*
P. Cairo Isid.	A. E. R. Boak and H. C. Youtie, *The Archive of Aurelius Isidorus in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo and the University of Michigan*. Ann Arbor, 1960
P. Col. 123	see Westermann and Schiller, *Apokrimata*

PCPS	*Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*
PE	Diocletian's *Prices Edict* (see Giacchero, *Edictum Diocletiani*)
PECS	R. Stillwell *et al.*, *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Classical Sites*. Princeton, 1976
P. Euphr.	see Feissel and Gascou, 'Documents'; plus *JS* (1995) 61–118; *JS* (1997) 3–57; *JS* (2000) 157–208; *CRAI* (1990) 144–66; *Semitica* 41–2 (1991–2): 195–208
PG	*Patrologia Graeca*
P. Giss.	O. Eger *et al.*, *Griechische Papyri im Museum des oberhessischen Geschichtsvereins zu Giessen*. Leipzig–Berlin, 1910–12
P. Giss. Lit.	*Die Giessener literarischen Papyri und die Caracalla-Erlasse*, ed. P. A. Kuhlmann (Berichte und Arbeiten aus der Universitätsbibliothek und dem Universitätsarchiv Giessen 46). Giessen, 1994
PGM	K. Preisendanz and A. Henrichs, *Papyri Graecae Magicae: die griechischen Zauberpapyri*, 2nd edn. Stuttgart, 1973–74
PIR	*Prosopographia Imperii Romani*
PL	*Patrologia Latina*
PLRE	A. H. M. Jones, R. Morris and R. Martindale, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, 3 vols. Cambridge, 1971–92
PO	*Patrologia Orientalis*
P. Oxy.	B. P. Grenfell *et al.*, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*. London, 1898–
P. Panop. Beatty	T. C. Skeat, *Papyri from Panopolis in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin*. Dublin, 1964
RAC	*Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana*
RlAC	*Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*
RAL	*Atti dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Rendiconti. Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*
RB	*Revue Biblique*
RBPh	*Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*
RE	Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*
REA	*Revue des Études Anciennes*
REArm	*Revue des Études Arméniennes*
REAug	*Revue des Études Augustiniennes*
REByz	*Revue des Études Byzantines*
RES	*Répertoire d'Épigraphie Sémitique publié par la Commission du Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*, vol. v, ed. G. Ryckmans. Paris, 1929
RFIC	*Rivista di Filologia e di Istruzione Classica*
RGDS	*Res Gestae Divi Saporis* (see also *ŠKZ*)
RHDFE	*Revue Historique de Droit Français et Étranger*
RIB	*The Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, vol. 1, 1965, rev. edn 1995
RIC	*Roman Imperial Coinage*. v.1 (Valerian 1 to Florian), P. H. Webb, London, 1927; v.2 (Probus to Amandus), P. H. Webb, London, 1933; vi (Diocletian's reform to Maximinus), C. H. Sutherland

	and R. A. G. Carson, London, 1967; VII (Constantine and Licinius), P. Bruun, London, 1966
RICH	A. S. Robertson, *Roman Imperial Coins in the Hunter Coin Cabinet, University of Glasgow*. III (Pertinax to Aemilian) Oxford, 1977; IV (Valerian to Allectus) Oxford, 1978
RIDA	*Revue Internationale des Droits de l'Antiquité*
RN	*Revue Numismatique*
RPC I	A. Burnett, M. Amandry and P. P. Ripollès, *Roman Provincial Coinage*, Vol. I: *From the Death of Caesar to the Death of Vitellius (44 B.C.–A.D. 69)*. London and Paris, 1992
RPh	*Revue de Philologie, de Littérature et d'Histoire Anciennes*
RS I	*Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage*, I: *Rom und Ostia*, eds. F. Deichmann, G. Bovini and H. Brandenburg. Wiesbaden, 1967
RS II	*Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage,* II: *Italien mit einem Nachtrag Rom und Ostia, Dalmatien, Museen der Welt*, eds. T. Ulbert and J. Dresken-Weiland. Mainz, 1998
RSA	*Rivista Storica dell'Antichità*
SB	*Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Aegypten*
SBAW	Sitzungsberichte der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Philosophisch-historische Klasse)
SC	Sources chrétiennes
SCO	*Studi classici e orientali*
SDHI	*Studia et Documenta Historiae et Iuris*
SEG	*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*
SHA	*Scriptores Historiae Augustae*
SIG^{3}	W. Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*, 3rd edn, 4 vols. Leipzig, 1915–24
ŠKZ	*Šabuhrs I. an der Kaʿba-i Zardušt = Res Gestae Divi Saporis* (see Huyse, *ŠKZ*; Sprengling, *Iran*)
SÖAW	Sitzungsberichte der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Philosophisch-historische Klasse)
Soc.	Socrates Scholasticus
Soz.	Sozomen
StAmst	Studia Amstelodamensia ad epigraphicam, ius antiquum et papyrologicam pertinentia
TAM	*Tituli Asiae Minoris*. Vienna, 1901–
TAPA	*Transactions of the American Philological Association*
TAVO	*Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients*
TIR	*Tabula Imperii Romani*; for individual maps, see details in Bibliography Part III
Tit. Ulp.	*Tituli ex Corpore Ulpiani* = Ulpian's *Regulae* (*FIRA* II.262–301)
TR	*Tijdschrift voor Rechtsgeschiedenis (Revue d'Histoire du Droit)*
TZ	*Trierer Zeitschrift*
YCS	*Yale Classical Studies*

ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*
Zon.	Zonaras
Zos.	Zosimus
ZPE	*Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*
ZRG	*Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte: Romanistische Abteilung*

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